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MANY LAUGHS FOR MANY DAYS

IRVIN S. COBB

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MANY LAUGHS FOR MANY DAYS

IRVIN S. COBB

MANY LAUGHS FOR MANY DAYS

Another Year's Supply (365) of His Favorite Stories as Told by

IRVIN S. COBB

GARDEN CITY PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.
Garden City, New York

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Many Laughs for Many Days

Printed in the United States of America

To

CHARLES D. FREEMAN Esq.

61042

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MANY LAUGHS FOR MANY DAYS

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§ 1 The Parable of the Snail

Two members of a colored labor battalion in France were languidly filling a shell hole behind the lines of the A. E. F. Along came an officer who spoke to them harsh words. When he had passed on, one of the pair, relapsing from temporary activity back again to his regular dreamy state, remarked:

"Suttinly is a mouty free cussin' w'ite man, dat young lootinent. Suttinly does know how to use strong language w'en he craves fur somebody to show him some speed. Puts me in mind of a parable."

"Whut's a parable?" inquired his companion sitting down on the edge of the excavation in order to give his entire attention to listening.

"I'm goin' tell you, Buddy. Dis yere parable is 'bout a snail. Now, dis yere snail belonged to our fambly. We kep' him fur a pet 'round de house. After 'w'ile he got so he could un'erstand ever'thing you said to him an' could tawk back same ez a Christian. I reckin dey never wuz no mo' likelier snail 'en whut dis snail wuz.

"Well, one mawnin' Pappy wuz tuck down sick wid a powerful miz'ry in his insides. He's 'feared he's gwine die, den an' dere. He tell Mammy to send fur de doctor right away. Mammy run to de do' to tell us chillun but we is all off skylarkin' somewhars an' 'tain't nobody in sight but de fambly snail, w'ich he is settin' on de do'-step sunnin' hisse'f. So she say to him, she say:

" 'Run quick fur de doctor, right away! Pappy's got de cramps an' seems lak ef we don't git he'p soon he gwine cramp hisse'f into a hard knot.'

" 'All right,' de snail say, 'all right, I'll go. You go on back inside de house an' look after po' Pappy an' I'll go fur de doctor.'

"So Mammy she went on back an' start in rubbin' Pappy's stomach. One hour pass, two hours pass an' Pappy don't git no better an' they ain't hair nur hide of no doctor comin'.

"Pappy he keep on moanin' an' groanin' an' carryin' on. Mammy she keep on rubbin'. She ain't stop to cook no vittles fur dinner; jes' keep on rubbin'.

"Twelve o'clock come an' still no sign of de doctor, an' Pappy gittin' wuss off all de time. Then, purty soon, it's one o'clock. After a spell it's two o'clock, an' den it's three o'clock. After aw'ile mo' it's gittin' to be goin' on fo' o'clock. Jes' befo' dark Pappy he say:

" 'I jes' natchelly can't stand dis no longer. Run out in de yard an' see ef de doctor ain't comin' yet.'

"So Mammy go to de do' an' lo an' behole, dere is dat snail moseyin' along down de walk an' not mo'n ha'f way to de front gate. He been all dat time gittin' dat fur.

"Mammy she's plum outdone. She yell out at him:

" 'W'y, you lazy, wuthless, no 'count snail, ain't I tell you early dis mawnin' dat po' Pappy mouty nigh daid, ain't I ast you go fur de doctor an' ain't you promise me you'd start fo'thwith, an' now, doggone you, yere you is, not traveled mo'n twenty feet! Whut kind of way is dat to ack?'

"De snail turn 'round an' rear back an' look Mammy in de eye an' he say to her:

" 'Lissen yere, woman, you talk to me dat way, I won't go a'tall!' "

§ 2 A Treat for the Truant

The man who told me about this swore that he saw it printed in the Personal Column of an Australian newspaper. He said he was sure it had not been inserted there for a joke; he felt convinced that it had been paid for and published in perfect good faith.

It was a short thing, this notice that he read, but it stated a case fully. It read as follows:

"If James Morrison, who twenty-two years ago basely deserted his helpless, penniless wife and his infant son, Michael, will return home, Mike will take pleasure in knocking hell out of him."

§ 3 Where Men Were Men

It was in the old wide-open days. Into a barroom in Vancouver stalked a stranger of formidable aspect and extensively haired-over. On a chain he was dragging a half-grown mountain lion.

The creature was newly-caught. It snarled and snapped and fought with its tether. Then, finding itself inside four walls, it

grew desperate and crouched and, with claws and teeth out, leaped for the throat of its owner.

The woolly man struck it in midair with a brawny fist, knocked it to the floor and kicked the beast into subjection while the awed spectators looked on. Then, advancing to the bar, he called for and drank in rapid succession three large glasses of raw whiskey.

As he was downing the third drink, a huge rattlesnake protruded its venomous head from the breast pocket of his coat, with its jaws gaping and its deadly fangs exposed.

"Git back there where you belong," ordered the stranger, dealing his deadly pet a slap with the flat of his hand. Cowed, the monster crawled back into hiding.

"Gimme about three or four more slugs of that red-eye," commanded the newcomer.

"Mister," inquired the barkeeper in a respectful tone of voice. "Where do you come from?"

"Tombstone, Arizona," answered the other.

"Must be a tough country down there," said the barkeeper.

"Sort of. They made me leave there."

"Who made you leave there?"

"Them fellers in Tombstone. They run me and a lot of other cake-eaters out of town—claimed we was sissified."

§ 4 The True Critical Attitude

Oliver Herford and I were talking one day about various writing persons. The name of a distinguished English novelist came up.

I mentioned certain of this gentleman's works. Herford shook his head.

"I'm not in a position to discuss that person's books," he said.

"Why not?" I asked. "Surely you're familiar with them?"

"No," said the famous wit. "I can't say that I am. Although myself an Englishman by birth, I am not familiar with his books."

"What's the reason for that?" I asked in surprise.

"It's very simple," said Herford, gently. "Something which I once wrote about him so prejudiced me against the man that I could never bear to read any of his stories."

§ 5 A Diagnosis by Nose

Little Evelyn ran into the cottage in the North Woods where she was spending the summer with her parents.

"Oh, Mama," she cried, "where is the bottle of listerine!"

"What do you want with listerine?" asked her mother.

"For halitosis," said Evelyn, whose family read the advertisements in the magazines and believed what the advertisements said.

"Who has the halitosis?" asked her mother.

"A kitty cat, that's who. I want to make friends with her."

"A kitty cat?"

"Yessum. I just now found a lovely strange kitty cat out in the woods. She's nice and tame and she's an awfully pretty kitty, with a big bushy tail and white and black stripes down her back, and the cunningest black eyes—but, Mama, she has a perfectly terrible breath!"

§ 6 Mind Over Matter

The train was *en route* from Bangor to Portland. One of Maine's typical sons was stretched across two seats in the day-coach contemplating the rugged scenery. At a small station another male boarded the coach. This passenger had the eager, inquiring eye and the long prehensile nose of a certain sub-species of the genus Yankee, of which he was a perfect specimen.

As he slumped down alongside the sprawling one, the newcomer spied in the rack above their heads a stout, smallish wooden box, heavily corded, with augur holes bored in the sides and ends of it. Speaking in a gorgeous Down-East drawl the inquisitive party put his first question:

"Nice day?"

"Yep," said the other.

"Goin' fur?"

"Portland."

"Portland, huh?—live there?"

"No, visiting."

"That your box up thar?"

"Yep."

"Looks kind of solid?"

"Is."

"Looks kind of heavy, too?"

"Is."

"Got holes in it, I see?"

"Yep."

"Whut's the holes fur?"

"Air."

"Whut you need air fur?"

"So it can breathe."
"So whut kin breathe?"
"What's inside."
"Oh! . . . Well, whut is inside?"
"Mongoose."
"Mon which?"
"No, mongoose."
"Mongoose, heh?"
"Yep."
"Whut the heck is a mongoose?"
"Small East Indian animal."
"Slick?"
"No, furry."
"Tame?"
"Not very."
"Would it bite you?"
"In a minute."
"Whut you want with a critter like that?"
The pestered traveler straightened up.
"Well," he said, "I'll tell you. A mongoose is an animal that lives on reptiles—snakes, lizards, toads. I've got an uncle in Portland. Fine man, respected citizen and all that, but he's got one weakness. Drinks. When he drinks he's bothered by snakes and lizards. I'm taking the mongoose down there to eat 'em."
"Yes, but gosh! Them varmints he sees is imaginary snakes!"
"Well, this is an imaginary mongoose."

§ 7 Deceased Would Be Dressy

The clothier was boasting of the sagacity of his head clerk.
"That feller Jake," he said, "that's the smartest boy in the world. You don't believe it, huh? Listen: I prove it to you. Only yesterday there come in here a poor widow woman whose husband just had died. She wanted to get some clothes to bury the corpse in.
"And what did Jake do? I tell you: Not only did he sell her the most expensive suit that we had in stock but he got her to take also an extra pair of trousers."

§ 8 The Complete Casualty List

The telegraph editor of a Denver newspaper complained to a country correspondent who omitted names in his stories. He wrote

the man that if he neglected this essential detail in his next yarn he would be discharged.

A few days later the editor got this dispatch:

"Como, Colorado, June 8.—A severe storm passed over this section this afternoon and lightning struck a barbed-wire fence on the ranch of Henry Wilson, killing three cows—their names being Jessie, Bossie and Buttercup."

§ 9 A Change Was Impending

The newly-arrived colored bully was seeking to impress the local bucks with a sense of his prowess.

"I'se a tough boy," he stated, "an' I hails from a tough town."

"Jes' about how tough is you, may I ast?" queried the home champion in misleadingly dulcet tones, at the same time feeling in his waistcoat pocket for his brass knucks.

"Well, whar I comes frum dey calls me 'Wild Bill'."

"Um huh?" said the other. "Well, after I gits th'ough wid you you'll be knowed frum then on ez 'Sweet William'!"

§ 10 So Many of Them Do

A foreign pianist was engaged to act as accompanist for an aspiring amateur singer. The amateur was a lady. She had bounding ambitions but her technique was faulty. This defect became manifest at the first rehearsal.

After the poor woman had flatted and flatted until she had flatted practically all of her notes, the accompanist waved her to silence.

"Madam," he said mournfully, "it is no use. I gif up der chob. I blay der black keys, I blay der white keys—und always you sing in der cracks!"

§ 11 A Breath from the Wildwood

For years this tale has been one of Sam Blythe's standbys.

Sam was born and reared in western New York on the lower edge of the Adirondack region. He says there used to be a guide over in the mountains who, being reckless by nature, made a specialty of escorting city sportsmen into the wilderness during the hunting season. Any North Woods veteran will tell you this is a hazardous calling. Moreover, the mortality figures prove it.

Green sportsmen invade the tall timber carrying high-power rifles and shoot at everything they see moving in the bushes. The result is that a few of them kill one another and the majority destroy their guides, even though the latter for self-protection wear red shirts and red hats and white neckerchiefs.

This particular guide, so graphically recalled by Sam, had several close calls. Finally, when a bullet had ripped his shoulder and another had blown his cap off, he had an inspiration. He made himself a suit of awning cloth of alternative stripes of white and blue.

But the first time he wore this costume abroad they brought him home again, bored through and through. As he emerged from a thicket a city gunner stationed across a clearing had plugged him.

At the inquest the remorseful slayer was introduced as a witness.

"Now look here," said the coroner, "of course nobody accuses you of killing poor Jim intentionally. But it does seem curious to me—and I imagine it strikes the members of the jury the same way —that when Jim was in striped clothes which could be seen a mile away, you, standing not a hundred yards distant, should mistake him for a deer."

"I didn't mistake him for a deer," said the city chap; "I thought he was a zebra."

§ 12 Just Like a Husband

"Honey," said the loving wife, "if I should die before you do will you promise to keep my grave green?"

"Don't be morbid," answered her husband; "what's the use of talking about anybody's dying? You look pretty husky to me."

He buried his nose again in his paper. He was reading something very interesting and he didn't want to be disturbed.

"Yes, I know, dear," she interrupted him again after a minute or two, taking up the thread of the conversation where it had been broken off, "but I want to be sure my last resting-place will not be neglected. You might get married again or something, and forget me."

"Huh?" he grunted, absent-mindedly, without looking up.

"I say, I don't want to be forgotten. I couldn't bear the thought of that. I suppose it's because I'm so sensitive — because I have so much temperament. Darling, are you positive you'll keep my grave green?"

"Um huh."

"Well, that's a great consolation. Only, I'd like for you to say it

with more feeling. Precious, are you absolutely certain you'll keep my——"

"Hannah," shouted the pestered man, casting his paper from him, "I'll keep that dad-gummed grave of yours green if I have to paint it."

§ 13 A Little Yuletide Fable

The time was Christmas Eve. Sandy McDonald sneaked down the back stairs of his home with a double-barreled shotgun, went outside and fired off both barrels. He then rushed back into the house and announced to his eight small children that Santa Claus had just committed suicide.

§ 14 Time to Swear Off

I have a friend. He lives down in Louisiana where he has lived all his life. He is the only man I ever knew who, in appearance, mannerisms and tricks of voice, lives up to the popular conception of a typical Southern gentleman of the old school—the type so often met with in fiction or on the stage but so rarely in real life.

Last fall, returning from a duck hunt in the Gulf marshes I climbed out of a mud-spattered jitney in front of a white-pillared pile set back among the magnolias and live oaks. My old friend, in his long frock coat, his wide slouch hat, his highly polished boots and his snowy shirt-front, stood on the porch ready to greet us.

After salutations, I said:

"Colonel Lem, in case you are suffering from a famine in these parts, my chum here"—I indicated my companion of the recent expedition—"has two quarts of guaranteed pre-war Bourbon in his kit-bag."

Colonel Lem tugged mournfully at the ends of his long mustache; a wistful light shone in his eye. He shook his head.

I gave a violent start.

"Can it be?" I asked, "that you, of all men, have sworn off?"

"Such is the melancholy fact," he stated.

"When?"

"It seems an eternity since I imbibed my last snort of red eye."

"But why? What made you quit?"

"Well, Son," said Colonel Lem, "I got a feeling that the last barrel of licker I drank must have disagreed with me!"

§ 15 The Wifely Sacrifice

Mr. Slocum comes home with furrows of care in his brow.

"Mary," he says, "the way bills keep piling up is scandalous. I'm spending more than I can make. We've got to cut expenses to the bone—both of us—if we expect to make ends meet at the end of the year. We've got to make personal sacrifices, starting with the little things and going all up the line. Now, what would you suggest?"

Mrs. Slocum ponders a moment.

"I'll tell you how we'll begin," she says, brightly then; "hereafter you can shave yourself—and I'll cut your hair."

§ 16 The Walking Railway Guide

Back to his former home in North Carolina returned a colored cosmopolitan. For two years he had been touring the country with a street fair and carnival company. So now he bore himself as a traveled person, one familiar with all far corners of the universe.

He stood on the principal corner of the colored residential section, recommending himself to an admiring—and envious—audience of old associates.

"Yas suh," he proclaimed. "I's been ever'whars they is to go and I's seen ever'thing they is to see. I done rid on ever' railroad in dese whole United States. Does you crave fur me to prove it? All right then, one of you local niggers des call off de letters—de 'nitials—of any railroad, big ur little, an' right away I'll tell you de full name of dat road."

A white citizen who had overheard the boast drew near. Unobserved by the braggart he began prompting one of the other darkies.

"I. C.," began the white man's accomplice.

"Illinois Central!" shouted the traveler.

"D. & R. G."

"Denver an' Rio Grandy," rattled off the sophisticate. A murmur of applause arose from the ring of listeners.

"A. T. & S. F."

"Atchison, Topeka an' Santy Fay—that's whut."

The signs of approval increased in volume.

"C. B. & Q."

The traveler blinked. For just the fraction of a second he hesitated. Then inspiration came to him:

"Chicago, Baltimore an' Cuba!" he shouted.

§ 17 Permanent Residents

A German composer of distinction, lately landed, was visiting an American song-writer at the latter's country place. He manifested much interest in various typically American domestic appliances and household conveniences. What particularly caught his attention was a sleeping porch, screened in. In broken English he asked his host the purpose of the screens.

"Why, to keep flies out in the summertime," said the Yankee.

Still the visitor seemed perplexed.

"You have flies in Berlin, don't you?" asked the American.

"Sure—millions of dem," said the German, with true Teutonic pride in the products of his native land.

"Well, what do you do at your house to keep the flies out?"

"We don't haf to keep dem out," explained the foreigner. "Dey alreatty are in."

§ 18 Coming Along with the Rest

Who was it said that when a married woman begins misbehaving her husband is the last person in town to hear the news? Whoever it was, he said a mouthful.

Take the case of Mr. Blank. It was a long time—so it seemed to the watchful and gossiping neighbors—before Mr. Blank's jealous suspicions became aroused.

However, once he became convinced that Mrs. Blank's love of admiration had carried her beyond the bounds of discretion, he proceeded to act.

He sat down and wrote this note to the good-looking bachelor, young Mr. Dash, who lived just across the street, and sent it over by special messenger:

"Sir—I shall expect you to appear at my office this afternoon at 3 o'clock to explain why you have been flirting with my wife.

"Yours truly,

"John J. Blank."

Promptly the messenger returned with an answer. The answer read as follows:

"Dear Mr. Blank—Your circular form letter of even date received and contents noted. Thanks for the invitation. I shall be very glad to attend the caucus.

"Sincerely,
"Horace K. Dash."

§ 19 Where the Blame Rested

As I recall, they first told this story on Theodore Thomas. After Thomas' death they tacked Sousa's name to it. The Sousa version has lately enjoyed a merited revival.

The great conductor was putting his band through a rehearsal. There was a recruit to the organization. The new member's instrument was a tuba. This person seemed incapable of getting through a somewhat difficult passage without making a hideous hash of his part of it.

Sousa halted the others and glanced reprovingly at the offender.

"What's the matter with you?" he demanded.

"It ain't me," explained the perspiring musician, "it's this dam horn." He shook the misbehaving instrument. "I blow in it so nice und sweet und it comes out so r-r-rotten!"

§ 20 A Hint to An Expert

A disgruntled performer walked into the office of E. F. Albee, the vaudeville magnate.

"Look here, Mr. Albee," he began, "I've got a kick to make against two guys that are now playing at your theatres."

"State the kick," said Mr. Albee.

"Well, you may not know it but I'm the best magician in the country. I'm an originator, I'm a genius. I think up all my own tricks. And now, along come these two fellows and swipe some of my best stunts and go to using 'em on the Big Time. Now then, what am I going to do about that?"

"Let's see," said Albee; "you're a magician, you say?"

"The best in the world."

"Well, how are you at vanishing illusions?"

"I haven't got an equal anywhere."

"Well, then," suggested Albee, "why don't you just make those other two fellows disappear?"

§ 21 It Wouldn't Be a Round Trip

Scouting on suspected ground, the revenue agent assigned to duty in a certain foothill county on the edge of the Cumberland mountains, saw a simple-looking twelve-year-old boy loitering along a bypath in the woods.

He hailed the youngster.

"Say, kid," he began cautiously, "do you live around here?"

"Yep."

"Where do you live?"

"In that there cabin right up the road here a piece."

"So? What's your name, then?"

"Shep Coombs."

"What's your daddy's name?"

"Anse Coombs."

"Aha!" said the raider. The scent was growing warm. "Well, now, look here, boy, how'd you like to make a little money?"

"I'd like it fust-rate."

"Then tell me whether there's any moonshining going on in this neck of the woods."

"Shore there is. Pap and Uncle Bill and Shad Eversole air runnin' a still right up yonder on the top of the ridge."

"Are they there now?"

"Yep."

"And how do you get to where they are?"

"Jest follow this trail."

"Well, that's fine," said the revenue man. "I think you've earned a dollar and I'm going to give it to you, too." He girded up his loins and prepared to climb the knob.

"Hold on thar, Mister," said the informant; "how about my dollar?"

"You'll get it—there's no hurry. Just stay right here."

"I'd ruther have it now."

"What's the matter with you anyhow?" demanded the stranger. "I've promised you a dollar and I always keep my promises."

"But I'd a heap ruther git it now."

"I tell you there's no hurry. I'm going to hand you that dollar as soon as I come back down from up this hill."

"Mister," said the youngster, softly, "you ain't comin' back."

§ 22 Not Under False Pretenses

Down in Arkansas in the old days there was a jerk-water railroad with a reputation. The reputation was that it never adhered to its schedule. Operating crews, and patrons as well, came to regard the time-card as the work of a practical joker.

There was a certain traveling man who rode over the line at frequent intervals. One afternoon when he disembarked from a smelly day-coach at his destination he hailed the conductor.

"Old man," he said, extending a large cigar, "accept this with my compliments as a slight token of gratitude."

"What's the notion?" inquired the other.

"Because I've been traveling on this road for twelve years and this is the first occasion when the train ever got in exactly on time."

"Mister," said the conductor, "that looks to me like a mighty good cigar and I'm fond of smokin'. But I can't take nothin' on false pretenses. I've got to tell you the truth.

"This ain't today's train. This is yistiddy's train."

§ 23 Floral Offerings

To be orthodox in everything in which a policeman figures, the said policeman should be an Irishman. Any departure from this is a violation of the traditions.

Nevertheless, and all the conventions to the contrary notwithstanding, the hero of this story is a policeman and not an Irishman. He is Scotch.

In my own defense let me state that there are such things in New York as policemen who are Scotch. For instance, I know a lieutenant at an uptown station-house who has an accent which suggests hot oatmeal gruel running out of a narrow-mouthed jug.

But our hero here was not a lieutenant but a patrolman walking post in a Bronx precinct. However, before we introduce him it is necessary first to present the other principal character of the little tragedy.

That other character was Irish, but he was not on the force. He was an elderly civilian who had stopped on a stroll to watch a job of street repairing.

Three stories up above his head a housekeeper placed a large platter of corned beef and cabbage—a combination affectionately known in New York as "Red Mike"—on the front window ledge

of her tenement. The ledge had a slant to it. The platter slid off and, descending, struck the onlooker squarely on the head, bruising his scalp and covering him with the contents of the heavy dish.

He gave a loud cry of pain and astonishment and sank to the sidewalk. He was not badly hurt but he had suffered a severe shock. As sympathetic onlookers pulled him up to a sitting posture the Scotch patrolman ranged up alongside and took in the sight.

"Well," he said, "I kenned you Irish were fond of corned beef and cabbage but, laddy, you're the first one I ever knew to decorate himself with it."

§ 24 A Voice Out of the South

A group of country negroes, seized with the desire to emigrate North—that same contagion, by the way, which is depopulating some of the cotton fields—got as far as Birmingham, Alabama, before their money ran out. In the hopes of raising funds sufficient to enable them to continue their journey, the stranded travelers sought employment.

One of them became acquainted with a white gentleman who threw several odd jobs in his way. But this scrappy employment, while it provided temporary food and lodging, did not serve to gratify the more pressing ambition.

Reaching his office on a certain morning, the citizen found his colored friend awaiting him at the door.

"Mr. Blank," said the applicant, "you's been so good to me already I hates to keep on pesterin' you, but I suttinly does need wuk mighty bad ag'in, an' I'se hopin' mebbe you kin he'p me out ag'in same ez you's done two-three times befo'."

"Well," said his benefactor, "as it so happens, you may be in luck. Just now I heard that they were needing a hand down the street here, at the Eagle Laundry."

"Thank you, suh," said the negro; "but Mr. Blank," he added, doubtfully, "I ain't never had no 'sperience washin' eagles."

§ 25 The Language of the Cradle

Booth Tarkington has immortalized the young lady who talked baby-talk. His characterization of her is one of the enduring creations of our native fiction. In real life, there sometimes bobs up an instance of this failing on the part of a fond parent.

Here is a case in point: A tired business man of the New York variety returned from lunch looking more tired than usual. To an associate in his office he said wearily:

"Ferguson's getting worse and worse."

"How do you mean—getting worse and worse?" inquired the partner. "Is he still telling stories to prove that new baby of his is the most wonderful child that ever was born in the world?"

"No, he's reached the secondary stage now," said the first speaker. "I judge from something that happened just now over at the restaurant that the infant must have arrived at the conversational age."

"What happened?"

"Here's what happened: I heard Ferguson say to the waitress, who came to take his order: 'Poor Da-da thirsty! Please give Da-da a jinky water!"

§ 26 Something New in Natural History

As Miss Elsie Janis told me the story, there was once a Britisher, a seafaring man, who had a turn for oil-colors. Naturally, his fancy led him to marines. In odd times aboard ship he practiced his art until he had mastered two studies—a brig running before the wind in the midst of a lot of cottony-looking waves, and a sloop beating her way along a rocky shore.

This done, the ambitious one decided to give up sailoring and turn artist in earnest. He would drift across the country with his materials strapped to his back and do signs for public houses. He had a natural fondness for public houses, anyhow.

On his first day's travel he got two commissions. On the morning of the second day at a point well inland he came upon a wayside tavern. Above its door hung a signboard so battered by the rains of years and so bleached by the suns that the original design upon it was practically obliterated; only a few pale streaks of color remained. In the doorway lounged the proprietor.

The wayfarer scented another job. He halted, introduced himself as a craftsman, and for a price offered to repaint the signboard.

"Righto," said the owner, and a bargain was struck. "Now then," said the public-house keeper, "wot's your notion abaht doin' me a sign?"

"Well, on this side 'ere, I'll do you a smart brig scuddin' along in 'arf a gale," said the artist, "and on the other side we'll 'ave a tidy sloop makin' for port with a sunset be'ind 'er."

"Wyte a bit, matey, wyte a bit," said the publican, "carn't you read? Don't you see it says yonder that this 'ere is the Red Lion Inn? It's been the Red Lion Inn for seventy years. You'll paint me a red lion there or the deal's off."

The artist fetched a sigh of resignation.

"'Ave your own wye abaht it," he agreed, "I'll paint you your bloomin' red lion. But I warn you now it's goin' to look quite a bit like a full-rigged ship!"

§ 27 The Heart Affairs of the Elderly

A distinguished actor, who isn't seen on the stage much any more, spends a good part of his leisure on a country-place where he plays at being a gentleman farmer. He has reached the time of life when most men have begun to exchange their emotions for symptoms, but he, being a healthy creature, goes in for hobbies.

He invited a theatrical manager up to spend the week-end with him. It was inevitable that the guest would be taken on a tour of the estate. He professed interest in the model barn, the sanitary dairy, the new orchard and the site for the proposed swimming-pool. Eventually his host brought him to a field where a flock of sheep were grazing.

Halting at the gate, the proud proprietor uplifted his voice in a call, whereupon the herd came flocking to him and, thrusting their noses through the pasture bars, muzzled their owner's hand and greedily gobbled up the tidbits which he had brought along in his pocket.

With pleasure alight in his eye, he turned to the visitor:

"See there!" he cried. "See how these little creatures love me!"

"Ah, yes," said the city man, "but then, you feed them."

"My friend," said the actor, "at my age we call that love."

§ 28 The Shape of a Home Plate

Tim Hurst, now deceased, was, as will be recalled, for years an umpire in the big leagues. He was behind the bat one day when the catcher took exception to Tim's judgment of pitched balls.

One came whizzing over. The catcher thought it should have been called a strike.

"Ball!" stated Tim.

"Look here, Mr. Umpire," snarled the catcher, "that plate has got corners on it!"

"Yes, son," said Tim; "but it ain't got bay windows on it!"

§ 29 The Behavior of a Hero

Readers of the daily papers will recall the so-called "bob-haired bandit," meaning by that the good-looking young woman who practiced her felonious calling with such success in Brooklyn a year or two ago.

One day she entered a chain grocery store in the happy quarter known as Flatbush, finding a young Irishman, the only clerk, on duty. She was armed with an automatic revolver and a growing reputation in the neighborhood.

She aimed her gun at the youth's palpitating bosom.

"Slip me the loose dough in the cash register, buddy," she ordered, "and then beat it out of here."

"And did you go?" asked a citizen to whom the victim later was detailing the exciting story.

"Shure and I wint, brave as a lion. I didn't stop nor falter nor turn back. Me heart was in every stride I took."

§ 30 A Seeker After Bargains

As I have remarked before, I do not know why it should be—but it is—that stories illustrative of a highly developed instinct for frugality nearly always should have natives of Scotland for their heroes. On my mother's side, I am part Scotch myself and, so far as I can recall, none of the members of our family have ever been renowned for saving the pennies.

With this digression I now proceed to relate a tale I heard about a youth born in Dundee who immigrated to this country and proceeded without loss of time to absorb a knowledge of American institutions.

He was taking his first walk down Fifth Avenue. At a certain corner, in the heart of the shopping district, he was halted by a sign over a large building: "Five and Ten Cent Store."

He considered this sign. Next he studied the contents of the wide show windows where domestic utensils, toys, and a wide variety of other goods were displayed.

Then he entered. Near the doorway he encountered one of those

impressive and dignified beings who unmistakably are assistant store-managers.

"Is it true, sir-r-r," inquired the Scot, "that nothing in this establishment costs more than five or ten cents?"

"That is correct," stated the floor walker.

"Verra well, then," said the newcomer, "you may show me to the boot and shoe department."

§ 31 Nothing More to Impart

A man driving along a country road, saw the roof of a farm-house ablaze. He gesticulated to an elderly woman who was standing quietly in the doorway:

"Hey, your house is afire!"

"What?"

"I say your house is afire!"

"What did y'say? I'm a leetle deaf."

"Your house is afire!" he yelled at the top of his lungs.

"Is that all?"

"Well, it's all I can think of right now."

§ 32 All Modern Conveniences

The scene is at church and the rector is in the midst of a morning discourse. Mrs. Smith, a member of the parish, is sitting in a pew well up toward the front. Alongside her is Mildred, her daughter, aged seven.

Mildred begins to fidget. Presently she tugs at her mother's frock and looks up with a distressed, rather pallid look on her usually rosy face.

"Mother," she whispers, "Mother, listen."

"Sh-h-h!"—a warning hiss.

"But, Mother," continues Mildred, "you've got to listen. Mother, I'm sick. I'm getting sicker. Something I ate for breakfast must have unagreed with me."

"Sit still and think about something else and you'll feel better," suggests Mrs. Smith, under her breath.

"No I won't either, Mother. I'm going to be awful sick in just a minute!"

"Well then," counsels the disturbed parent, "I expect the best thing for you to do is to slip out very quietly and go behind a big

tree in the church yard and then when you're all right again you can come back."

With bulging eyes and pale lips tightly locked, the child wriggles out of the pew and trots down the aisle. In what seems to Mrs. Smith an amazingly short time, everything considered, she reappears with a more placid expression on her face and quietly rejoins her mother.

"Do you feel better?" inquires the lady.

"Yessum, I feel all right now," says the returned one.

"You weren't gone very long. Did you find a big tree easily?"

"Nome, I didn't have to go all the way out into the yard. Right outside the church door I saw a kind of box and it had a little sign on it. And the sign said: 'For the Sick.'"

§ 33 The Return of the Absentee

The night-clerk of the hotel was surprised to see a very battered looking person in his shirt-sleeves come rocking up to the desk and pause there groggily.

"What can I do for you?" inquired the clerk.

"I'd like," said the stranger laboriously, "to be 'scorted to that room 202 on secon' floor."

"202?" repeated the clerk. He consulted the register. "Why, that room is occupied by Mr. Oscar J. Billups of Toledo, Ohio, and it's pretty late to be rousing a guest."

"I know that, well as you do," stated the inebriated one. "Nevertheless and contrary notwithstanding, I desire to be shown to room 202 without any further con—con—conver—any further talk."

"What business have you got there?" demanded the clerk.

"Thash my business."

"Well, what's your name, then?"

"I'm Mr. Oscar J. Billups of Toledo. I jusht fell out of the window."

§ 34 Those Faulty Weighing Machines

For the benefit of those among us who have not been abroad and had clothes made by the same tailor who makes clothes for the Prince of Wales, it should be explained in the preface that on the other side "Big Ben" is the familiar name of a very famous town clock and, by the peculiar phraseology of the British, what we call a mail-box he calls a pillar-box.

So much for that. Now for our little story:

A London policeman appears in court as witness against a person arrested by him for drunkenness.

"How do you know the defendant was intoxicated?" inquired the magistrate.

"Well, your worship," says the copper, "when I first see 'im 'e was droppin' a penny in the pillar-box and then 'e looked up at Big Ben and cried out 'Great Gawd! I've lost eleven pounds!' "

§ 35 An Easy Job for a Colored Boy

Most of us are familiar with the story of the colored brother in a Southern town who was approached by a labor agent seeking recruits for a construction contract in a nearby state.

"Look here, boy," said the white man. "Would you like to have some nice steady work?"

The darky stirred uneasily, where he reclined against the sunny side of a cotton bale.

"Not if I kin get anything else to do," he stated, truthfully.

A somewhat newer variant of the same general theme has to do with a large black female who spoke pridefully of her favorite son's present position.

"Henery, he's got a mighty nice job now," she said. "He gits plenty of money an' don't eben have to soil his hands. He's travelin' wid a circus. All he has to do is to git into a cage twice a day an' put his head in de lion's mouth. De rest of de time he has to hisse'f."

§ 36 One Who Was Not to Be Insulted

As one may gather, who reads the despatches from Hollywood, not all the kings and queens of the movie world are heavily burdened with education. In fact, I violate no confidence but merely reveal a somewhat commonly known trade secret when I say that some of our screen stars really do not write the articles on art and culture and kindred subjects which appear from time to time in moving picture magazines under their famous names. The press-agent does the work; they merely take the credit for it.

There is one rarely beautiful creature whose earlier mental cultivation was somewhat neglected. There are still a good many topics upon which she is ignorant. In fact, one man said of her once that

the only word of two syllables that she knew was "fillum"; and another, who had known her before she became illustrious, declared that they had to burn down the schoolhouse in order to get her out of the second grade.

This young woman was sitting in a Los Angeles restaurant giving the crowd, as the saying goes, an eyeful. Her fragile loveliness showed to particular effectiveness in the costume she wore.

A professional rival was stirred by the spectacle to pay the vision a sincere compliment. She arose from her place, crossed the room and, bending over the star, said to her:

"My dear, you look tonight like a bit of Italian Renaissance."

"Is that so?" snapped back the beauty; "well, just lemme tell you something—you don't look so doggone good your own self, neither!"

§ 37 Without Any Dressing Whatever

Cissie Loftus, the gifted English impersonator, has been giving a merited circulation to a story of a five-year-old boy who, as a special treat, was sent to spend the week-end at the country-place of a friend of his parents.

On the first evening of his visit, everything passed off very pleasantly until the hour came for the small guest to retire. Then a disturbing situation arose. It developed that his mother, in packing her son's bag, had failed to include a sleeping suit for him.

The lady of the house had an idea.

"Don't worry, Egbert," she said comfortingly. "You're just about the size of my little Helena here. We'll tuck you away in one of her nighties and you'll be quite comfy, I'm sure."

Egbert burst into loud wails.

"I won't put on a little girl's nightie!" he proclaimed. "I won't sleep in a little girl's nightie. I'd rather go to bed raw!"

§ 38 Fragrant Memories of Olden Days

I don't know whether it is a reflection upon my habits or upon theirs, but at any rate, it is a striking coincidence that so many of my friends have, in former times had friends who were in the retail liquor business.

Peter Dunne, creator of the immortal Mr. Dooley, used to love to tell a story of an old chum of his who, in earlier times, ran a bar on a side street in Chicago. One evening Dunne and two other

reporters were enjoying the hospitality of the establishment when there entered a fourth newspaperman locally notorious for always being ready to borrow money and never being ready to pay any of it back.

"Uncle Johnny," said the newcomer, "I'm off on an out-of-town assignment and I need a little cash. Slip me ten dollars, will you? I'll hand it back to you on payday."

Knowing the applicant's reputation, Dunne and his companion expected a refusal. To their surprise the proprietor opened the cash-register and produced a greenback. The impecunious one scooped it up, muttered a word of thanks and was about to depart when his eyes chanced to fall upon the figures on the bill.

"Hold on, Uncle John!" he said. "I asked you to loan me a tenner and this is only a five spot."

"That's right," stated Uncle John. "'Tis an even break between us, buddy. Five you lose and five I lose."

Montague Glass tells a yarn about a former acquaintance of his named Van Cott, who owned the old Grapevine saloon on Market street in San Francisco down near the docks. According to Glass, Van Cott was one of the most accommodating human beings resident at that time on this planet. No matter what a patron might want, he strove to provide it.

On a quiet evening three Englishmen, newly landed from a Melbourne packet, lined up at the bar.

"Well, gents, what's it goin' to be?" inquired Van Cott.

"We're in a bit of a 'urry," stated one of the visitors in a Cockney accent, "and we'd like to 'ave six 'ighballs."

This was in the day when most lovers of hard liquor favored toddies and the national tipple of Britain was unknown along the Pacific slope.

"Excuse me?" said the puzzled Van Cott. "What was it you said you wanted?"

"Six 'ighballs," repeated the customer.

Van Cott hailed Manuel, his Mexican man of all work.

"Mannie," he said, "these gents here are in a kind of a rush and they want six eyeballs right away. I don't know what they want 'em for but you go out and ketch three Chinamen."

§ 39 Touching on Our Daily Menu

If my memory serves me right, I already have told the yarn of the patron in the cheap restaurant who ordered eggs for breakfast.

"Boss," said the colored waiter, "mebbe you better tek somethin' else. I would not care to reckermend de aigs dis mornin'."

"Why not?" asked the white man. "Aren't the eggs fresh?"

"I don't know ef they is or ef they ain't, 'cause to tell you de truth we ain't got none."

I am repeating this story because it seems to me it should be included with the two others of a somewhat similar tenor which I heard the other day.

Glancing over the fly-specked menu of a short-order establishment in search of dessert a gentleman who had just finished with the more solid parts of the meal, ordered stewed peaches.

In a minute or two the waiter came hurrying back from the kitchen.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, "but you'd better order something else. The stewed peaches are pears today and they've turned sour on us."

Here is number three of the series:

A County Kerry man, newly landed in the country, was taking his first walk up Sixth Avenue under escort of his brother who had been living here several years. In the window of a delicatessen store he saw a great mound of fresh cranberries.

"What are thim?" he asked.

"Thim is cranberries," said his brother.

"Are they fit to eat?"

"Are they fit to eat?" repeated his brother. "Why, whin thim cranberries is stewed they make better applesauce than prunes does."

§ 40 A Tale of the Christmastide

This as it happens, is a true story. A few days before the holidays there met on Broadway two well-known citizens of New York. One was distinguished in business, the other, in certain circles, was equally famous as being the most persistent borrower of money—without security—on the entire Eastern seaboard. On one pretext or another he was forever getting sums, great or small, from friends or comparative strangers, and never by any chance did he pay anybody back. He made a fairly comfortable living at it, too.

The business man was no intimate of his; their acquaintance was of the sketchiest sort. But of course each knew the other by reputation. After a few casual remarks they separated.

That evening, at his residence, the business man found a letter sent by special delivery. It was from the champion borrower. It read as follows:

"My dear old man:—

"Meeting you today so pleasantly revived memories of our former meetings. It stirred in my heart thoughts of the approaching Yuletide—of the season when there should be peace on earth and goodwill among men. Now, as it happens, the coming of the most important festival of the whole year finds me financially a bit embarrassed. This condition is only temporary, I assure you, but I need funds—in short, a loan to be repaid of course at the earliest opportunity.

"So, in order that I and some who have a sentimental claim upon me may enjoy a merry Christmas I am asking you to send me by return mail your check for one thousand dollars.

"Thanking you in advance for the favor, I am as ever,

"Yours etc. etc."

The recipient sat right down and wrote a reply and posted it that same night. He said:

"My dear Blank:—

"I have just read your communication of this date and here is my answer to it. But you will search these contents in vain for any check bearing my signature.

"With you I share the holiday spirit. Like you I look forward to enjoying the day. But—if I sent you a thousand dollars of my money, you might have a merry Christmas, but I'm damned if I would.

"Yours cordially."

§ 41 The Wily Tiger

This one springs from French sources. A Frenchman was going to India. His friends told him that on no account must he fail to enjoy the tiger hunting.

"It's no trick at all," they said. "You tie a bleating goat in a thicket at night; its cries attract the tiger. Meanwhile you are in a tree nearby. When the beast arrives, aim between its eyes shining in the darkness, and fire, and it will fall as though stricken by lightning."

On his return they asked how many tigers he had killed.

"None at all," he replied sadly. "They've become altogether too clever. They now travel in pairs, and each one closes an eye. So of course . . ."

§ 42 A Voice from the Misty Past

It must have come to pass, this one, since home brew and bootleggers' wares became popular among the drinking classes. Stuff that will blind you certainly should be potent enough to produce fogginess of memory.

Two gentlemen who had succumbed to indulgence in unholy potations were carried to a hotel room by sympathizing bystanders and were undressed and stretched on adjoining beds and left there to sleep it off. Let us call one of them Henry J. Thompson and the other Horace K. Robinson.

When they recovered consciousness it was broad daylight. They stared at each other and mutual suffering drew them together sympathetically.

"Hello," said Thompson.

"Hello," answered Robinson.

"Lemme introduce myself," said Thompson, "I'm—I'm——." He hesitated. "Thash funny. For the moment I can't recall just who I am."

"Same here," confessed his fellow-souse. "Prob'ly it'll come to me in a minute, but for the moment I don't seem to recall, either. Tell you what, I'll look in my vest—got some cards there with my name on 'em."

Groggily Mr. Robinson got upon his feet and made his way to a heap of rumpled clothing upon a chair. He made a mistake here. It was not among his own garments but among the garments of his new room-mate that he fumbled until from a waistcoat pocket he produced a card.

"Here it is," he announced. "Now ever'shing'll be alri'." With difficulty he read the words inscribed thereon.

"Henry J. Thompson," he spelled it out. "Don't sound ver' familiar still that mush be me."

Somewhere in the back part of the real Thompson's brain a chord of memory was played upon.

"Ver' glad meetcher, Misher Henry J. Thompson," he said dreamily. "But shay, listen—thinking it over, seems to me you got some relatives by marriage that I don't like."

§ 43 A Tragedy of the Theatre

Small-timers in vaudeville expect hard luck. Until they succeed in catching on in the main circuits—if ever they do succeed—they

count on occasional engagements in the four-a-day houses as their portion. Yet proverbially they are optimistic. Only once in awhile do you hear of a performer or a team of performers giving up the gallant struggle.

I heard lately of a very distressing instance. A couple had a "dumb act," as it is called in the vernacular of the profession. They owned a flock of educated ducks. Theirs was a good act, so they thought, but bookings were few and far between. Finally there came a period of excessive dullness when the two artists could secure no engagements whatsoever.

They were laid off for upwards of a month. So they took refuge in a little house loaned to them by a sympathetic friend, and did their own housekeeping, such as it was.

The fall season opened up. Their agent in New York wired them as follows:

"Swanson Brothers,
"Trained Duck Act.
"Summit,
"New Jersey.

"Have booked you for full week at Far Rockaway, opening next Monday."

But this was the melancholy and heartbreaking answer which came back:

"Impossible to accept. Have eaten the act."

§ 44 A Counter-Blast for the Accused

I have a friend, a Catholic clergyman, who has strong views on the use of strong drink. In all his blameless and devoted life he has never known the taste of intoxicants, and he loses no opportunity to impress the benefits of sobriety upon persons who are addicted to the liquor habit.

One night he was riding uptown on an elevated train after having delivered a sermon at a mission church in the lower part of Manhattan. At Thirty-fourth street a young man heavily under the influence of something fragrant and potent staggered into the car and lurched down into a seat alongside my friend. The good father was properly shocked. He turned a grieved face upon the inebriated one.

"My son," he said, "I'm truly sorry to see you in this condition. Alcohol is a frightful curse to the human race and with all my heart

I beg you to give it up. You'll be a better and happier man if you leave the accursed stuff alone."

The stranger opened a bloodshot eye and glared balefully at the priest.

"You've got a nerve," he said huskily, "to be talkin' to me about drinking, when you're so drunk yourself that you don't even know how to put your collar on the right way."

§ 45 Like Painting the Lily

One of Montague Glass's classics starts off with an account of a scene in the Pennsylvania Station at New York. A whiskered gentleman, evidently hailing from the East Side, is administering physical punishment to a small boy. A stranger, of humane instincts, pushes his way through the interested crowd of onlookers and lays a firm hand upon the arm of the bearded one.

"Here, hold on!" he orders. "Why are you slapping this child?"

"He is my own son," explains the East-Sider.

"I don't care whose son he is," states the interrupting citizen. "You've no business to be slapping him and shaking him this way. You stop it immediately or I'll make trouble for you!"

"Meester, listen," says the parent. "Two years ago my wife runs away with my best friend. One year ago my partner cheats me in business and I go broke. Three months ago I get the inflammatory rheumatism and the doctors pull out all my teeth. Six weeks ago my daughter gets married to a loafer and I have got to support both of 'em. Day before yesterday my old grandmother dies in Philadelphia and I spend the last money I have got in the world for tickets for me and this boy so we could go to the funeral. I give the tickets to Ikey, here, and he puts them in his mouth and just as we are ready to go on the train he breathes the wrong way and swallows them."

The father laughs, a short, hard, bitter, metallic laugh.

"And you would make trouble for me!"

§ 46 Where Life Still is Simple

On the Staked Plains in western Texas life is more or less primitive. A Federal judge down in Texas told me a story illustrative of conditions in that wide and rather desolate area. According to his account, a traveler on horseback was making his way through an

especially remote district. After hours of lonely riding he approached a tiny adobe house sitting in the midst of an unbroken expanse of alkali and mesquite and bunch-grass. Just as he came abreast of this forlorn homestead, a thin, under-nourished woman in a faded wrapper darted out of the door, sped across the road and hid herself in the chapparal before the traveler either could hail her or inquire into the causes for her flight. As he checked up, puzzled to account for this curious behavior on her part, a lubberly boy, apparently about fourteen years old, came hurriedly forth from behind the little building.

"Mister," he called, "did you see a woman runnin' away jest now?"

"I did," said the stranger. "Who was she?"

"That was my maw."

"Your maw, eh? And what was she running away from?"

"I reckin she's runnin' away from me—doggone it!"

"Why, you infernal young scoundrel!" exclaimed the traveler. "I've a half a mind to get down off this horse and give you a good thrashing. What do you mean by chasing your poor mother about over the country like this? What has she done to you?"

"She's a' aimin' to wean me," said the youth.

§ 47 Why the Patient Fainted

It is reported to me, apparently on reliable authority, that this one really happened. A youth from an interior county of Georgia suffered from a serious internal complaint. He had a fear of surgeons and hospitals; a good many of us have the same feeling.

He became exceedingly low-spirited when the local practitioner told him that he must undergo an operation and ordered him North to a large hospital. Here, after diagnosis, he was sent to the operating room.

Hours later he recovered from the effects of the ether to find himself in a ward containing various surgical cases in various stages of convalescence.

"Oh, Lord," groaned the Southerner. "Oh, Lord, I'm so glad that's over! I wouldn't go through it again for a million dollars. And thank God I don't have to!"

"Is that so?" inquired the patient in the bed on his right, who was by way of being a practical joker. "How do you know you won't have to go through it again and soon?"

"Because my appendix is out," the newcomer explained. "The whole thing's done."

"That's what *I* thought," stated Job's comforter. "But what happened? Fifteen minutes after I'd come to, they were rushing me back upstairs and opening me up all over. One of them careless doctors had left two sponges and a towel inside of me."

"Huh, you got off lucky," spoke up another wag, from his cot nearby. "They had to hustle me back to the table and rip out all the stitches to get a pair of lost steel forceps. Say, the way those guys mislay things is——"

At this moment the surgeon who had officiated at the latest job opened the ward door and glanced keenly at the patient from Georgia.

"I can't find my hat, anywhere——" he began, but got no further.

With a loud cry the Southerner swooned.

§ 48 The Light That Did Not Fail

It was a rainy night and a dark one. Under a street-lamp at Fifth Avenue and Fifty-fifth Street a policeman came upon a disheveled and weather-beaten citizen down on his knees pawing about over the asphalt with his hands.

"Hello," said the cop, "what's wrong?"

The man raised a red face and spoke thickly, with hiccoughs for punctuation marks:

"Had streak bad luck," he explained. "Losht ten dollar bill."

"Too bad," said the sympathetic officer. "Is this the spot where you first missed it?"

"Oh, no," stated the searcher. "I losht it over yonder, Sixth Avenue an' Fifty-fifth, one block from here."

"Then why are you looking for it here when you lost it there?"

"Better light at thish corner," said the inebriate, and went on pawing.

§ 49 A Trap for the Candidate

Once upon a time, answering a request for information from the editor of a magazine, I risked the guess that, in the educational and cultural scale, the average moving-picture promoter ranked somewhere between Key West conch fishermen and members of the late Bender family of Kansas.

All of which served to remind me of a story I heard concerning the assistant manager of one of the big Hollywood studios. On the Coast, this gentleman is famous. He is regarded there as a self-made man who rather skimped the job.

To him there came an applicant for a job as scenario editor.

"What salary you want?" demanded the great man.

"Two hundred a week."

"Two hundred vot a week?"

"Dollars."

The magnate leaped off his chair. He was accustomed to paying beautiful ingenues and glorious-looking leading men hundreds of thousands a year but the thought that a mere literary guy should crave so much money appalled him.

"Say!" he exclaimed, "you ain't no writer. You're a boiglar. For why should I give you two hundred dollars a week?"

"Well," said the candidate, "I spent several years at college getting an education. I've got a diploma to prove it and I won a degree in English literature. That took work and study. And I've been studying forms of expression ever since. I expect to be paid for it."

"So?" said the inquisitor, and a crafty light came into his eye. "You are swell educated, eh?"

"You might call it that."

"Then say for me a big word."

§ 50 And Father Spoke as Follows:

The family—Father Jones and Mother Jones and Master Rollo Jones, aged seven—were taking a sea voyage; it was the first sea voyage any of them had ever taken.

And the weather was bad, as so often it is, and the sea was rough, as nearly always it is. The child seemed immune to sea-sickness, which is a blessing frequently vouchsafed those of tender age. He frolicked about the ship with merry cries and got under-foot and in people's way and generally deported himself as any healthy, active seven-year-old does on a holiday.

On the second day of their indisposition his parents dragged themselves up on deck. If they must die—as seemed to them probable—they would die in the open air under the skies rather than in a stuffy and crowded stateroom. Commiserating stewards guided their languid steps to two steamer chairs placed side by side in a sheltered place and eased them down there and covered them with rugs and left them to suffer together.

Presently Mrs. Jones, tossing an aching head from side to side, beheld a spectacle which under ordinary circumstances would have caused her to leap to her feet and dart to the rescue. For, twenty feet away, her only son was in peril. Unobserved, the restless little

chap had climbed the guard. He now stood balanced on a rail, one chubby hand clutched in a steel guy rope, one small foot waving over the bounding billows, and crowing in his joy as the motion of the ship now lifted him up, now sank him low.

His mother tried to rise but failed. She strove to cry out to her endangered son but her voice issued forth only as a thin, weak wheeze.

In this emergency she clutched with a weak hand at her husband's listless form.

"Oh, Henry," she whispered desperately, "speak to Rollo!"

The father's lackluster gaze followed where her finger pointed.

"Hello, Rollo," he said, in hollow tones.

§ 51 As Fair for One as for the Other

The raw recruit approached the old regular army sergeant to whose squad he had been assigned.

"Mister Sergeant," he began politely, "I think maybe I've made a mistake. When I enlisted I oughter told 'em I wanted to go into the flying corps. But I forgot it and now they've went and stuck me here in the cavalry."

"Well, what's the matter with the cavalry?" demanded the veteran.

"Nothin', so far as I know," explained the green hand. "The trouble is with me. I don't know nothin' about horses. I never was on top of a horse in my life. So I want to ask you as a personal favor to break me in sort of easy."

"Come with me," said the non-com., with a steely glint in his eye. He led the way to a corral and pointed out a sway-backed, wall-eyed Western colt.

"There's your mount," he announced. "You say you ain't never rid a horse. Well, this here horse ain't never been rode. You two amateurs can start in together."

§ 52 That Haunting Melody

For this one I also am indebted to Montague Glass.

Queen Mary and several members of the royal household were enjoying a concert by the band of the Coldstream Guards in the grounds of Windsor Castle. The Queen was particularly attracted toward a composition played with much dash and spirit and received with corresponding applause by the assembled audience.

Accordingly she dispatched an equerry to inquire of the bandmaster the name of the unfamiliar composition.

During the absence of the equerry, there was much speculation as to the nationality of the composer. The Master of the Royal Buck Hounds was of the opinion that it was by Debussy. On the other hand, the Master of the Royal Stag Hounds professed to see in it some of the characteristics of Max Reger with just a dash of Arnold Schoenberg. Six Masters of Assorted Hounds declared for the Italian composer Zandonai; but Her Majesty secretly hoped that so interesting a composition had been written by an Englishman, so that it might be placed permanently in the repertoire of the Royal Band Concerts.

When the messenger returned, however, he bore the disappointing information that the composition was that of an American musician. It was entitled:

"I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Can."

§ 53 A Tribute from the Umpire

Fred Stone, the comedian, was staying one summer in England. That was before his old partner, Dave Montgomery, died. Montgomery was there, too.

Hot days made the exiled pair homesick for baseball. About the Savoy Hotel and the theatre they found just enough Americans who loved the sport of their native land to form two scratch teams, and they borrowed the use of a cricket field for an afternoon and marked out a rough sort of diamond and on a given afternoon played a match for the all-English baseball championship, Stone being captain of one nine and Montgomery of the other.

When they arrived at the scene of conflict a difficulty arose. There were exactly eighteen Yankees present and all of them expected to play. Where would they get an umpire? Choice fell upon a Britisher among the spectators. He was selected because he had served as a referee at cricket games. He didn't know the rules of baseball but he thought he could learn them. His name was Waltrous.

So Waltrous was given a drilling. He grasped the fine distinction between a strike and a ball and a foul; the matter of what happened when a fielder caught a fly was easily explained to him, but at the end of half an hour he was still vague touching on the more subtle shadings of play. Still, the rival teams were rearing to go and the commanders decided to proceed.

After some coaching Umpire Waltrous stationed himself back of the catcher and the battle started. The lead-off man of Stone's outfit whanged the first offering of the rival pitcher squarely on the nose and sent the ball high in the air. The centre-fielder caught it.

"You are through, sir, quite through," said the umpire, leaping forward.

Whereat there was loud applause from both sides. Well pleased at having so quickly mastered the intricate phraseology of the Yankees' pastime, the umpire strutted back to position.

The next man up slammed a wicked grounder toward Montgomery's short-stop. The latter scooped it up and threw it to first base. But the play at the bag was close.

The catcher swung on the umpire.

"How was that?" he barked.

With unfeigned admiration in his tone, Mr. Waltrous gave his decision:

"Marvelous, sir," he declared; absolutely marvelous!"

At this point the game was called on account of hysterics.

§ 54 Enough Is Enough

Mrs. Carr was Irish—her first name was Honoria and her husband's first name was Terence—and she had a conspicuously large family in a neighborhood where large families were the rule and not the exception.

Her twelfth had just been born. Ten days after the latest addition arrived the mother ventured out upon her front stoop. Neighbors paused to congratulate her, but for some private reason the good lady seemed in no mood for congratulations. For the most part she maintained a silence.

An acquaintance of a whimsical turn of mind happened along and saw her sitting there and halted.

"Good mawnin', madam," he hailed.

"Good mawnin', Mr. Donovan," answered the matron.

"Well, I heard the news," he said, jovially; "'tis quite a string of little Carrs ye have now, Ma'am."

"Yes," she said, crisply, "but the lasht wan was the caboose."

§ 55 The Perfect Color Scheme

On Fifth Avenue, Charley Towne, the poet, met Oliver Herford, the humorist.

"Ollie," said Towne, "sartorially you're a wonder to me. Always, no matter what the season, you wear clothes of the same becoming shade of gray. Winter time or summer time it makes no difference. The weight and the weave and the texture of your garments may change, but the color doesn't. Now, what I'd like to know is how you always succeed in getting such a perfect tone."

"Simple enough," said Herford. "You see, I've had the same tailor for years. He has my measurements on file. So whenever I need a new suit I just send him a sample of my dandruff and tell him to match it."

§ 56 The Higher Education

The séance was in full swing. Various spirits had responded to invitations from the medium to commune with the audience. Thomas Jefferson rapped on a table until his ghostly knuckles must have been sore and, by request, Sir Isaac Newton obliged with a rather sketchy tambourine solo. Napoleon had a bad cold; he enunciated huskily and finally, losing his voice altogether, blatted feebly through a tin horn. Cleopatra floated overhead, dimly revealed in regal robes of white cheesecloth. Altogether, it was a successful séance. Sir Conan Doyle would have been tickled half to death.

The master of ceremonies—Mrs. Medium's husband—announced the second phase of the program. If any one present wished to establish liaison with the shade of some departed dear one, Madam would do her best to oblige. From the body of the house spoke up Mr. Rofalsky of the East Side.

"I should like it," he stated, "to speak a few words with my Uncle Meyer vot died in Warsaw last year."

Madam went off again into the silences. There was a breathless pause. Then the black calico draperies of the cabinet were agitated by a mysterious wind and from its interior a muffled voice issued, saying:

"This is Uncle Meyer."

"Hullo, Uncle Meyer," said Mr. Rofalsky.

"Howdy, my nephew," came the answer.

"Uncle Meyer, how is it by you?"

"Fine. How are things with you, nephew?"

"I couldn't complain."

Another pause ensued. Mr. Rofalsky was thinking deeply.

"Uncle Meyer," he said at length, "von more question I should like it to ask you?"

"Proceed, my dear nephew."
"Where the hell did you learn to speak English?"

§ 57 A Hint to the Wise

This one has been doing yeoman service for a great many years. But, as I have remarked more than once, before now, the age of a story is nothing against it. If it has endured through the generations it must have had merit.

As I heard it first, the scene was a frontier town in the early days. The town had one street and every other building along the street was a saloon, with either a dance hall or a gambling room or both, in connection.

It was on a Sunday afternoon, and in the rear room of one of these saloons a poker game was in progress. Around the table sat four cow-men all in their working regalia. The fifth player was a one-eyed card shark who was working for the house. The farther the game progressed the more evident became the fact that somebody present was manipulating the cards.

Finally a middle-aged westerner with a long gray tobacco-stained mustache rose from his chair to his full stature of six feet, spat a wad of tobacco into a nearby spittoon, reached into his pocket, pulled out his plug, took a fresh chaw, put the plug leisurely back into his pocket and drew out a big six-gun and laid it on the table in front of him. Then he cleared his throat and spoke as follows:

"Well, boys, it's evident no doubt to all of you that there's cheatin' goin' on in this here game.

"Now, boys, I ain't sayin' as to who's doin' this here cheatin' or I ain't mentionin' any names. I ain't even got any suspicions. All I've got to say is this: If the feller that's monkeyin' with the deck don't stop it, I'm goin' to shoot the dam' scoundrel's other eye out."

§ 58 Dauntless Geraldine

"Yes," said the most gifted liar of his generation, "oh, yes, I used to be a fancier of homing pigeons. That was after I gave up training Bengal lions for pleasure. You remember I was telling you about that here only the other day? Well, anyhow, after I got tired of taming tigers and sold off my collection to Ringling Brothers I got interested in pigeons. I suppose it was the contrast between ferocious denizens of the jungle and the cooing, feathered

inmates of the dovecote that attracted me. I'm a great hand for extremes, you know—liable to be exploring the Polar regions one year and penetrating the jungles of Borneo the next. That's me!

"Well, anyhow, I developed the champion homing pigeon of the entire world. I called her Geraldine. Geraldine was famous all over the globe. Wherever people had pigeons they spoke of Geraldine.

"Let me tell you of probably her most remarkable feat. After she had broken all the records for speed and distance flying, a fellow came over here from Belgium purposely to see her. I found out afterwards that he was jealous. It seemed he owned homing pigeons himself. He was an infernal scoundrel, too—but I didn't find that out until later.

"He sought an introduction and after he had ingratiated himself into my confidence he made a wager with me. The terms of the bet were these: We'd each put up ten thousand dollars. He'd take Geraldine in a closed cage on the fastest train running between Philadelphia, where I lived then, and Washington. Just as the train pulled into Washington he'd release her and if she got back home within two hours the purse was mine.

"But mark you, the man was a crook. He turned her loose according to the agreement but just before he did so he clipped one of her wings so that she couldn't fly a foot; then he dropped her off the back end of the rear car of the flier, and the last he saw of her the poor little thing was squatted between the tracks in the Washington yard, dodging the switch engines."

"Then you declared a fraud and refused to settle, I suppose?" put in a listener.

"Not at all, not at all," said the liar. "As a matter of fact, I won the bet. In exactly an hour and fifty-eight minutes Geraldine entered my yard.

"But her feet were terribly sore for several weeks!"

§ 59 Where the Peril Lay

A traveler, passing through a colored settlement, heard cries of anguish. Rounding a turn in the lane, he came upon a large black woman who unmercifully was belaboring a small wailing pickaninny.

"Wait a minute," said the stranger. "What's that boy done to deserve such a beating?"

"He's done done plenty," stated the woman, pausing with hand uplifted. "He tuk an' left de chicken-coop do' open an' all de chickens got out an' run off."

"I wouldn't worry about that," said the gentleman, anxious to save the offender from further punishment. "You know how chickens are—they'll come back home."

"Come back?" Her voice rose to a pestered shriek. "Huh,—they'll *go* back!"

§ 60 A Pleasant Time for Auntie

An elderly lady who lived in a remote interior village came to visit her niece and the niece's husband at their home in one of Philadelphia's most fashionable suburbs. Nearby was a very well-known golf course.

On her second afternoon as a guest the visitor went out alone for a stroll. Upon her return the young hostess said:

"Well, Auntie, did you enjoy yourself?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Auntie, beaming. "Before I had walked very far I came to some beautiful rolling fields. There seemed to be a number of persons about, men mostly, and some of them kept shouting at me in a very eccentric manner but I took no notice. There were four men who followed me for some time, uttering curious excited barking sounds. Naturally I ignored them, too. Oh, by the way," she added, "I found such a number of curious little round white things like balls. I picked them all up and brought them home to ask you what they are."

§ 61 Guide Posts Needed

The physician had arrived at the bedside of the ailing person for his second professional visit. On the occasion of his first call there had been a thorough examination and an equally thorough investigation as to symptoms. Now he was returning, after having the prescriptions filled.

"Well, here we are," he said, in his best official manner—you know, merry and bright. He produced from his pocket one bottle and two pill boxes and opened them up.

"Perhaps I'd better explain to you," he went on. "The large pink pellet is for the kidneys, the little white pellet is for the digestion and this tablet is to stimulate the liver. Understand?"

"But say, Doc, look here," said the patient, dubiously. "How in thunder will them things know where to go after they get inside?"

§ 62 Unconscious Humor!

It is stated that Governor Pinchot, of Pennsylvania, was presiding at a dinner. After the eating was over came the inevitable speech-making. Presently a most dignified and ponderous person got upon his feet in response to an invitation from the chairman and proceeded to unburden himself of what was on his mind, if any. He was one of those blights on modern society, afflicted with the sin of a galloping tongue who, from time to time, begins a new phase of the oration with the line: "Just one word more, my friends"—and then never keeps the promise!

This particular individual was an especially boresome specimen of his type. He droned on and on and on interminably. The audience grew impatient and fretful. The hum of conversation grew louder and louder.

Governor Pinchot felt it his duty to rap for order. As he brought his gavel down with emphasis on the table, the handle snapped. The maul-shaped instrument of hard wood hurtled through the air and struck with a resounding thud squarely on the high bald forehead of a gentleman seated at a guest table ten feet away. The victim, who already was in a slightly groggy state as a result of references to his private flask, sank back in his chair.

A horrified hush followed the accident. The speaker took advantage of the quiet to go on with his remarks.

At this, the injured gentleman revived slightly. With his eyes still closed he murmured in a voice audible to all present:

"Hit me again. I can still hear him."

§ 63 The Mistake of the Messenger

A company commander of one of the colored regiments serving in France during the Big War brought his men to a position in the first-line trenches during the advance through the Argonne forest. Presently it dawned upon him that his outfit had lost contact with the supporting forces on the left. It was necessary to re-establish liaison.

He beckoned to him a strapping black private and bade the latter carry the word to the main body of the troops. The prospect for the messenger was not a pleasant one. He must cross a distance of two hundred yards in the open under fire of enemy sharp-shooters.

"I don't need to tell you," counseled the captain, "that the Germans will try to wing you. If you run in a straight line they're

likely to get you, but if you zigzag I don't believe they can hit you. Good luck to you."

Late that evening, the Germans having fallen back, the captain found his messenger in a forward dressing station. The latter was awaiting removal to a field hospital. He had been punctured, painfully but not seriously in three separate places by three separate bullets.

The commander stooped down by the wounded man:

"I'm glad to see you alive," he said, "but sorry to find you shot up this way. Why didn't you zigzag as I told you to do?"

"Cap'n, suh, dat's percisely whut I did do," answered the solider. "But I reckin de trouble wuz dat I zigged w'en I should 'a' been zaggin."

§ 64 A Puzzle Beyond Solving

A gentleman who had been imbibing heavily of forbidden stuff bumped into another gentleman who also, it was plain, had had recent dealing with a bootlegger. Each felt congenially inclined toward the other. They fell into a somewhat hiccoughy conversation.

"Seems like, to me, I've seen you somewhere before," said number one, between puffs, as he vainly endeavored to light the sodden stump of a cigar with a dead match.

"I wouldn't be surprised," said number two, lurching slightly.

"Didn't I meet you one time in Chicago?"

"Not me. I never was in Chicago."

"Neither was I. Well then, the question is, who the hell was them two guys that met in Chicago?"

§ 65 The Temperature of a Genius

Among musicians this story, which is said to be a true one, has lately enjoyed wide circulation and a justifiable popularity.

Heifetz was making his American debut at Carnegie Hall before a tremendous audience. In a box sat Godowsky, the pianist and composer, and with him was a certain distinguished violinist. Very shortly, it was plain that in this newcomer, Heifetz, was an artist who would make the world at large happier for his playing, but by the same token would fill the souls of a good many rival violinists with the pea-green essence of envy. Geniuses, as we know, proverbially are jealous of other geniuses.

Almost immediately the famous performer who had accompanied Godowsky was in a profuse perspiration. He fetched out a handkerchief and applied it vigorously to his streaming face.

"Heavens," he remarked under his breath, "it's frightfully hot here tonight!"

"So?" said Godowsky. "It's hot maybe for fiddlers—but not for pianists."

§ 66 Strange Tongues

It was an Irishman who said that the Sicilian earthquake was a visitation upon an irreligious people.

"But the Sicilians ain't irreligious," protested a friend; "they're a religious people. Any time you go in a church of them Sicilians you'll find a lot of them down on their knees prayin'."

"Sure they pray," said the first speaker. "I've heard thim meself, the poor furriners. But who the divil could understand thim?"

§ 67 Mr. Pincus' Last Words

On the top floor of an East Side tenement, Mr. Pincus lay dying. Never again would he sit patiently in his second-hand clothing establishment on the ground floor, never again would he chaffer with customers. He was through with shop-keeping forever. For days, now, he had been stretched on his bed in the little flat upstairs, growing steadily weaker.

Today the physician had abandoned all hope for him and had broken the news to the patient's household that the end was at hand.

To the sorrowing family it seemed that the husband and father was at the last gasp. But, as they stood grouped about him, he opened his eyes and in them was the light of consciousness. His wife leaned over him:

"See, Abram," she said, between sobs, "I am here. All the children are here—Lena and Rosy and Issy and David and Meyer and me—we are waiting to hear your last message and to pray for you. Speak to us, Abram."

His lips moved. Mrs. Pincus bent her head still lower to catch the words.

"Listen children," she bade them. "From Popper comes now last words. Vot is it, Popper?"

"Who is watching the store?" asked Mr. Pincus.

§ 68 Outside the Fold

About once in so often, my old friend, S. O. Muldrow of Arkansas, turns up with a bit of native Southern folk lore which has in it the savor of the soil.

He writes me that not very long ago the Baptists in his home town of Malden combined in a great meeting. The seven-year-old son of the local Baptist pastor imitated the parental example by organizing a revival in his back-yard with a group of his little playmates in the rôles of the converts. In order to give the proceedings an air of verity, the organizer announced that the rest must undergo the ceremony of complete immersion. Here a difficulty arose. Some of the youngsters pointed out that their mothers and fathers might be fussy if they came home wringing wet.

In this emergency the minister's son had an inspiration. He ruled that the rite could be performed by proxy.

A rain barrel filled with water was found behind the kitchen. In this was dipped a reluctant puppy belonging to one of the children. Then an unhappy rooster was plunged deep, emerging with bedraggled feathers and protesting squawks. Two hens followed as vicarious sacrifices.

There yet remained one little girl. For her substitute she chose the family cat, a brindle Tom, who snoozed unsuspectingly on the rear fence. She captured him and brought him to the improvised fount. But the sagacious animal seemed to realize what was in store for him. He wriggled and yowled; he scratched the little girl's hands; he bit at the officiating evangelist when the latter sought to baptize him.

"I'll tell you," piped up the little girl, "let's just sprinkle him and turn him loose. He looks like an old Methodist to me anyhow!"

§ 69 The Cry of the Pessimist

In my old town the champion misanthrope was standing with several others upon the steps of the county court-house. The noon hour came, and the whistle on the nearby planing-mill sounded.

"Twelve o'clock," he remarked. "Well, I guess I'd better be going home to dinner. If dinner ain't ready I'm going to raise hell, and if it is ready I ain't a-goin' to eat a damn bite."

§ 70 Straightening Out a Mistake

The person on trial was colored. He protested his innocence of the offence charged. But the jury, after listening to His Honor's instructions found him guilty and the judge, evidently convinced that there had been no miscarriage of justice, sentenced the convicted man to a long term of imprisonment at hard labor in state's prison.

The deputy sheriffs had manacled the malefactor and were taking him away when His Honor, face aflame with sudden indignation, halted the procession.

"Here!" he ordered. "Bring that man back here!" The officers returned the handcuffed offender to the bar.

"What do you mean," demanded the irate judge, "by using profane language in connection with this court? How dare you curse me? I am strongly tempted to add five years more to your sentence."

"Jedge," pleaded the offender, "I didn't say nuthin' ag'in you."

"Have you the audacity to stand there and tell me that a minute ago, as you were being led from this room you did not mutter under your breath profane utterances aimed at the dignity of this court?"

"Naw suh!" stated the negro. "Jedge, please suh, lemme tell you how 'twas. I jest got to thinkin' dat even if I can't git no jestice in dis world I'll be shorely able to explain when I gits to Heaven how come I got snarled up in dis yere mess. So I begins talkin' to myself. I jest says: 'God am de Jedge! God am de Jedge! God am de Jedge!'—jest like dat."

§ 71 Another Southern Outrage

They used to tell this story of an old Confederate soldier who ran a saloon in a North Carolina town—a small city, rather. He had two outstanding characteristics. One was his frugality. The other was his idolatry for the memory of Stonewall Jackson, under whom he had served in Virginia.

On a freight train, one night, two shabby wayfarers rolled into the town where the old soldier lived. Neither of them had a cent. They had eaten, thanks to an hospitable housekeeper up the line, but their thirst was enormous. As they lingered outside a saloon wondering how they might go about satisfying their alcoholic longing without money to pay for it, two customers came through the swing-

ing doors and halted on the sidewalk, in hearing of the famished strangers, and began chatting. The proprietor within was the subject. Before they passed on, the eavesdropping pair had a fairly complete mental picture of the personality of the saloon man. They framed a plan of campaign. They entered and called for toddies. As the old warrior placed the orders before them the chief conspirator remarked casually:

"I'm mighty glad to get down into this country. I'm Northern born myself, but I'm a strong Southern sympathizer, the same as all my people are. And I always have believed that Stonewall Jackson was the greatest fighting man that this country or any other country ever produced. Now, you take Jackson's Valley campaign——"

The saloon-owner almost climbed over the bar:

"Lemme tell you about that there Valley campaign, pardner," he cried out. And did so, for fifteen minutes on end. Finally, coming to a pause, he was reminded that business was business.

"By the way," he suggested, "you didn't pay me for those two drinks you and your friend drank."

"Why, don't you remember?" said the plotter; "I handed you some money just about the time I happened to mention Stonewall Jackson. Now then, since you fought under him, do you chance to know how he happened to be shot accidentally by his own men?"

"Do I know!" exclaimed the old Confederate. "My son, I reckon I know more about the untimely ending of Stonewall Jackson than any other man in the whole state of North Carolina. Listen here to me——"

Five minutes later the second tramp broke in on his discourse:

"Say, bo," he said, "that's all right about this here war talk. But whut's the reason you don't slip my pal his change?"

§ 72 Where the Fault Really Belonged

He couldn't have been more than six years old. He sat alone on a bench in the vast waiting room of the Grand Central Terminal. Passersby turned to look at him. He made such a wonderful picture, what with his yellow curls, his great brown eyes and a face of almost angelic beauty.

For half an hour or more he remained there, a solitary little figure of patience. Then, of a sudden, it became evident to the admiring spectators that he was troubled. Tears rose in those glorious brown eyes. He tried to wink them back but they overbrimmed and ran down his cheeks. His lips quivered; he wept aloud.

A sympathetic lady left her own place and hurried across the room to him. As she took him into her arms she said comfortingly:

"Why, what's the matter, little fellow?"

"My mamma lost me—that's what," he sobbed. "I told the dam fool she would."

§ 73 Getting the Inside Information

A spry colored youth entered a drugstore and, dropping a coin into the slot of the pay telephone, asked Central for a certain number. When connections had been made, persons near the booth heard him saying this:

"Is dat Mizz Henery Pearce speakin'? Well, Mizz Pearce, did you want to hire a smart colored boy fur a handy man around yore flat? Ma'am? You say you already is got a boy wu'kkin' fur you? . . . Is dat so? Wellum, is you satisfied wid him? . . . Den you ain't thinkin' bout mekkin a change? . . . Dat's all, ma'am."

He put the receiver on the hook and emerged from the booth. The head clerk, who had been one of the ear-witnesses to his remarks hailed him:

"If you're looking for a place you needn't go any further. Don't you see that sign there in the window saying 'Help Wanted'?"

"I ain't lookin' fur no place," said the youth. "I already is got a good job—been wukkin' at it goin' on two weeks now."

"I don't understand," said the puzzled clerk. "Why were you calling up that lady?"

"Oh, dat's de lady I wu'ks fur. I was jest checkin' up on myself."

§ 74 Pious Moments

The ceremony of getting two small brothers to bed was under way. The younger had been undressed, had knelt at his mother's knee and then had been bundled off for the night. The older boy was in the middle of his devotions when his little brother from the adjoining room called out to him. The devotee remained silent.

"Say, Bill," called out the younger child, "what's the matter with you? Why don't you speak back to me?"

Aggravated beyond control, Bill raised his head.

"Go to hell!" he shouted, "I'm sayin' my prayers!"

§ 75 What the Placard Said

Two elderly ladies went to a symphony concert. Both were music-lovers and both fairly well acquainted with what is known as worth-

while music as counter-distinguished from the cheap, vulgar kind, which is the only kind I really enjoy. Presently the orchestra swung into a dreamy, soothing number. Neither of the pair recognized it. There was something vaguely familiar about the air but still they couldn't put their tongue to the title of it.

"I wish we had thought to get programs as we came in," said one, in a well-bred whisper.

"So do I," agreed the second; "although, for that matter, it wouldn't have done me much good if I had remembered to get one, because I left my reading-glasses at home. But there's a printed sign yonder at the side of the stage—probably it's an announcement. Your eyes are better than mine—see if you can make out what it says."

The first lady squinted at the placard:

"Yes," she said, "it gives the name of the thing that's now being played. I never heard it before—it must be from one of the lesser-known operas. It's 'Refrain From Spitting.'"

§ 76 One Walk They Would Take Together

Following the close of hostilities two members of a colored labor battalion—natives of the same inland Georgia town—were sitting on a dock at Brest. Naturally, their thoughts dwelt on what they would do when they been shipped back to the States and mustered out of the service.

"Me, I done got it all figgered out," said one. "I been takin' a lesson from dese yere Frenchmens. Dey ain't got no race-feelin's; dey don't draw no color-line. So, I 'spects to carry on 'en I gits back jest de same ez I'se been doin' over yere—only mebbe mo' so! Things shorely must 'a' changed back home sence we been away. So, ez soon ez I strikes our ole town I'se goin' git me some w'ite clothes, all w'ite frum haid to foot—w'ite suit, w'ite necktie, w'ite straw hat, w'ite shoes, ever'thing w'ite. An' I'm goin' put 'em on an' den I'm goin' invite some w'ite gal to jine me an' wid her on my arm I'm gwine walk slow down de street bound fur de ice-cream parlor. Whut does you aim to do w'en you gits back?"

"Well," said his companion, "I 'spects to act diffe'nt frum you, an' yet, in a way, similar. I'm goin' git me a black suit, black frum haid to foot, and black shoes, an' I is gwine walk slow down de street, jest behine you—bound fur de cemetery!"

§ 77 The Opening Ceremony

There used to be a self-made person in San Francisco, named O'Brien, who sought a job in the sanitary department of the city government under an incoming administration. On an appointed day he presented himself to the head of this department for a Civil Service Examination. The inquiry was conducted orally.

"O'Brien," began the presiding official, "what we want here is not so much theory as practical experience. Now then, we'll suppose an imaginary case. Assume that you were called upon personally to clear out a sewer down in Chinatown that was eighty feet long and four feet in diameter and blocked up at both ends. What's the first thing you'd do?"

"Bless meself!"

§ 78 A Vision and a Prediction

Altogether, I figure I must have heard a dozen separate renditions of this ancient classic. Nearly every state in the Southwest has its own way of telling it, differing more or less from all the other ways. However, the version I like best is the Arizona version.

As this one runs, the thing befell in the old territorial days when the country was cruder than it is now. It seems there was a Mexican sheepherder who committed a cold-blooded assassination. Even law-abiding sheepherders were none too popular back in those times, and this particular sheepherder immediately became the object of an intense and general aversion on the part of the citizenry. He was pursued, captured, lodged in jail, and in due time having been indicted, was brought up for trial before a certain judge.

The jury heard the evidence and the speeches, then retired and within an hour came in with a verdict of murder in the first degree. But, short as the time of their deliberations was, His Honor had not wasted it. During the recess he had retired to his private chambers where he had consumed the better part of a quart of prime rye whiskey. When he returned to the bench to hear the jurors' findings and to pass sentence, he was in a weaving way. He slumped down in his chair and when the foreman had announced the result just arrived at in the jury room, he with difficulty focused a wavering eye upon the convicted malefactor and in a thick tone gave the order:

"José Manuel Miguel Xavier Gonzales, stand up!"

The prisoner rose in his place.

"José Manuel Miguel Xavier Gonzales," said His Honor, "in but a few short months it will be spring. The snows of winter will flee away, the ice will vanish and the air will become soft and balmy. In short, José Manuel Miguel Xavier Gonzales, the annual miracle of the year's reawakening will come to pass.

"The rivulet will run its purling course to the sea. The timid desert flowers will put forth their tender shoots. The glorious valleys of this imperial domain will blossom as the rose. From every tree-top some wildwood songster will carol his mating song. Butterflies will sport in the sunshine and the busy bee will hum happily as it pursues its accustomed avocation. The gentle breezes will tease the tassels of the wild grasses. And all nature, José Manuel Miguel Xavier Gonzales, will be glad.

"But you—you yellow-bellied Mexican son of a gun—you won't be here to see it, because you're going to get hung four weeks from this coming Friday."

§ 79 The Still Small Voice of Pride

To me, there is, along with the humor of this yarn, an underlying note of pathos, which is as it should be. Comedy inevitably takes on added power when it is actually contrasted with tragedy. The story has an English setting but the type it depicts is common in our country, too.

An elderly unmarried lady is the central figure of it. She was gently reared and all her life, until financial misfortune came to her, had been in comfortable circumstances. Now, though, she was much put to it for a means of livelihood.

Luckily, she owned a few hens and in the newly risen emergency she decided that it was incumbent upon her to swallow her pride and go forth in the highways and byways and peddle eggs.

But she did not altogether succeed in swallowing it, as the sequel will show.

With a basket on her arm she walked along the sidewalk of a bye street in her native town saying, over and over again in an agonized whisper:

"Eggs, tuppence. Eggs tuppence. I hope to Heaven no one hears me! I hope no one sees me! Eggs tuppence."

§ 80 A Hot Finish for a Warm Prayer

The late Sam Jones was the progenitor of a large group of pulpit evangelists who employ spectacular methods of converting wander-

ing souls to the better life. Twenty-odd years ago he occupied the place in the public eye which today is so competently filled by the Rev. Billy Sunday.

Mr. Jones had a sincere fondness for the black race. This was only natural. He was born and reared and lived most of his life in a Georgia town where he had negroes first for his playmates and, later on, in his maturer years, for his neighbors, his servants and his friends.

He would take time from a monster revival to slip away to some small colored church on a back street and make a talk to the dark congregation gathered there. He was fond of saying that the most striking and, in some regards, the most eloquent prayer he ever heard was delivered by a colored pastor of an Arkansas community in presenting him to the latter's assembled flock. Mr. Jones, who had a marvelous memory, had brought away with him the prayer, intonations, dialect and all. It was a treat to watch him as he rolled up his eyes and lifted his arms in perfect imitation of an old-time negro exhorter and then poured forth the petition so sincerely delivered by the original.

By his telling of it, the preacher first invoked the divine mercy upon the audience, then upon the nation, next upon the entire creation. He asked help from on high for the President of the United States, for the sick and needy and distressed of all races in all climes; for mankind in every corner of the globe. At length, he approached the climax, which according to Mr. Jones, ran as follows:

"Oh, Lawd, gib Br'er Jones de eye of a eagle so he kin spy sin a mile off!

"'Luninate his face wid de blessed ointments of dy favor till 'longside of him de flames of Hell will look lak a tallow candle!

"Glue his yeah to de Hebenly telephone an' connec' him wid Central in de sky!

"Nail his hands to de Gospel plow an' drive him down into some lonesome valley whar prayer is want' to be made!

"An', please, oh, Lord, pour all ober him de karosene oil of dy love and set him on fire!"

§ 81 Absolutely Inconceivable

The late Paul Armstrong used to love to tell the story of the deaf man who was presented to the beautiful and charming Miss Heffeldinger.

"Mr. So-an-So," said the mutual friend, "I want you to meet Miss Heffeldinger."

Mr. So-an-So's eyes widened in admiration for the gorgeous creature facing him.

"I'm awfully glad to meet you, Miss—Miss——" he began.

"Miss Heffeldinger," prompted his friend, raising the voice slightly.

"I'm awfully sorry to be such a nuisance," said the deaf man, "but, as the young lady can see for herself, I'm rather hard of hearing. Would you mind repeating the name just once more?" And he cupped his hands behind his ear.

"HEFFELDINGER!" shouted the introducer.

The afflicted one shook his head sadly.

"It's no use," he lamented, "I can't make it out at all. Why, it sounds like Heffeldinger to me!"

§ 82 The Soul of Accommodation

One of the hobbies of Charles M. Schwab, the steel magnate, is running a stock farm. He has a model garden and a model dairy and a model all-the-rest-of-it down in Pennsylvania. His fad takes the form of a constant striving to improve the breed and increase the output of his herds.

One day while Mr. Schwab was visiting the place, a farmer drove over from the adjoining valley to present a proposition. It seemed he was wishful to dispose of a treasured family cow and he had hoped he might interest his famous neighbor in the idea of buying her.

"Mr. Schwab," he began, "I'm willing to let that cow go at a bargain just to be sure she gets a good home. Why, she's the sweetest, gentlest beast you ever saw. My wife and the children are perfectly devoted to her and she just dotes on them. You never in all your life struck a cow with such a good disposition and——"

"Yes, quite so," broke in Mr. Schwab; "but what sort of a milker is she?"

"What I was about to say was that you won't never regret buying her. It's a pleasure just to have that cow around you."

"No doubt, but I'd like to have a few figures on her average yield of milk and its average richness," explained the steel man.

"You wouldn't bother yourself about no figures once you got hold of that cow. Why, you'd be spending half of your time just petting her, and inside of two days she'd be following you about like a dog. Why, here just the other day she——"

"Now, hold on please," interrupted Schwab again. "Let's get

right down to facts. The question is this: How much milk does this cow give?"

"Mr. Schwab," stated the owner, "as I just now told you, that cow's got the best disposition in the world even toward a stranger. And if she had any milk she'd give it to you in a minute."

§ 83 The Advantage of Being Quick-Witted

Just as a congenial group of San Francisco sportsmen were starting on a hunting trip into the wilds of northern California, the cook who had been hired to accompany the expedition fell ill. On such short notice no substitute could be found, so the party decided to go ahead anyway.

After they got into camp they fixed on this emergency plan:

Every second day they played a round of poker hands face up, and the member with the lowest hand was designated as cook for the next two days with the proviso, however, that if any other individual complained during that period about the cooking, the cook should be relieved of his job and the kicker made to perform it for him.

The first man to be stuck with the cooking job was a prominent attorney. He had never so much as boiled a potato before, and the meal which he turned out for his fellow campers on their first night in camp was so unutterably bad that hardly anybody could touch it.

"This is the damndest stuff I ever ate," one of the victims said in an absent moment. Then he remembered the penalty.

"But I like it," he added hastily and emphatically, "Gee, how I do like it!"

§ 84 A Real Cause for Sorrow

There are various versions of this one. All of them are good. It is, I would say, one of those sure-fire stories which cannot be seriously damaged even by a faulty rendition.

The occasion is a concert in a Northern home. An ambitious pianist has just finished playing "Way Down Upon the Swannee River".

In the corner sits a gentleman who was brought to the party by one of the friends of the hostess. As the performer concludes, the strange guest sinks his head in his hands and bursts into loud sobs.

The concerned hostess hurries to him and puts a compassionate hand on his shoulder.

"You must be a Southerner," she says, "that this should make you weep so."

He raises a tear-stained face.

"No madam," he replies, "I'm a musician."

§ 85 A Lady in the Case

Master Willie, aged nine, came sniffing into the presence of his father.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded the parent.

Willie stifled a sob.

"I've just had a terrible scene with your wife," he said.

§ 86 For Purposes of Concealment

Not so very long ago the military attaché of one of these fly-wheel republics in Central America, where they are always having revolutions, came up to New York from the legation at Washington on important official business. Calling upon a military tailor on Fifth Avenue he explained his mission. There had been a change of administrations in his country—the first one, it would seem, in nearly nine months—and the new government had decided to alter the uniforms of all the branches of the national defense.

It was the visitor's purpose to give the contracts. He had brought with him special designs, hand-colored in the chosen effects. There ensued a busy time in the tailor shop. It would seem that the fancy of the Central Americans ran to startling contrasts in color and to much use of braid, buttons, rosettes, festoons and plumage.

Undress and full dress had been selected for the navy, for the officers and men of the infantry, and for the artillery. Next, the attaché produced a drawing for a costume more gorgeous than any already shown. There was a cocked hat, rather resembling the kind worn by a Knight Templar in this country, excepting that it was bright red with an adornment of vivid green parrot-feathers floating out behind. There was a double-breasted blue coat heavily embossed with gold lace on the cuffs, sleeves, breast, collar, and skirts. There were baggy crimson riding-breeches also, be-laced down the seams. There was a pair of shiny black patent leather riding boots with an adornment of silver spurs and, for final touches, massive bullion epaulets and white crossbelts finished off with huge bright buckles.

"Ah," said the dazzled tailor, "how very striking! I presume this uniform is to be worn by your cavalry?"

"Oh no," said the attaché. "This is for our Secret Service."

§ 87 The Happy Bereft

Callie, the colored cook, who had twice been widowed, waited upon her mistress to give notice. It appeared that she was surrendering her job to undertake matrimony again.

"Well, Callie," said the white lady, "I hate to lose you but I hope you're going to be happy. I didn't know, though, that you were even engaged."

"Oh, yassum," said Callie. "I been engaged now fur goin' on ten days."

"Who is the bridegroom?"

"Wellum, he's a mighty nice man."

"Have you known him long?"

"Yas indeedy. Don't you 'member, Mizz Harrison, dat yere 'bout two weeks ago you lemme off one day right after dinner-time so's I could go to the fun'el of a lady friend of mine?"

"Yes, I do."

"Wellum, de one I'm fixin' to marry is de corpse's husband."

§ 88 Over and Over and Over Again

A kindly citizen, passing by an apartment house in the early hours of the morning, saw a man leaning limply against the doorway.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Drunk?"

"Yep."

"Do you live in this house?"

"Yep."

"Want me to help you upstairs?"

"Yep."

With much difficulty he half dragged, half carried the drooping figure up the stairway to the second floor.

"What floor do you live on?" he asked. "Is this it?"

"Yep."

Rather than face an irate wife who might, perhaps, take him for a companion more at fault than her husband, he opened the first door he came to and shoved the limp figure in.

He groped his way downstairs again. As he was going through the vestibule he made out the dim outlines of another man, apparently in worse condition than the first one, who had just staggered in out of the night.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Are you drunk, too?"

"Yep," was the feeble reply.

"Do you live in this house, too?"

"Yep."

The Samaritan half-carried the stranger to the second floor where this man also said he lived. He opened the same door and pushed him in.

As he again reached the front door he discerned yet a third man, evidently worse off than either of the other two. This person was disheveled and bleeding from small wounds on his head and face. He was about to approach him when the object of his solicitude darted out into the street and threw himself into the arms of a passing policeman.

"For Heaven's sake, Off'cer," he gasped, "protect me from thish man. He's done nothin' all night long but drag me upstairsh an' throw me down th' elevator shaf'."

§ 89 Cutting Out the Frills

Into the smelly Bowery lunchroom entered a hungry and impatient person. He took a seat. A shirt-sleeved waiter ranged up alongside him.

"Well," demanded the newcomer, "where's the menu?"

"Say," answered the waiter, "where do you think you are, anyhow?—the Ritz-Carlton? We ain't got no menus. Just pick out what you want, same as our other customers does, and if we got it I'll bring it to you."

"But how am I going to know what you've got if it ain't wrote out on a card?" said the puzzled patron.

"Why, you just take a look at the tablecloth and see what other folks have had today," explained the servitor.

So the stranger took a look at the spots on the tablecloth and ordered lentil soup, hamburger steak, fried tomatoes, blueberry pie, and a cup of coffee. After he had concluded a somewhat hurried but satisfactory meal again he hailed the waiter:

"Where's the check?"

"Still dreamin', huh?" said the other scornfully. "Ain't you got it through your head yet that this ain't no fancy joint? We don't have no checks. All you got to do is stop there at the cashier's desk by the door as you go out and she'll tell you how much you owe."

"How is she going to know what I had?"

"Trust her—she'll know, all right."

So the departing customer, without a word, halted before the

cashier. The latter, a keen-eyed young woman, bent forward over her desk and gave a quick appraising glance at his shirt-front.

"Lemme see," she murmured, "lentil soup, hamburger, fried tomatoes, pie and coffee—ninety cents, mister."

§ 90 Registering a Minor Complaint

An old negro man with an appetite so voracious as to give him more than a local reputation, visited the commissary store on the Mississippi plantation where he lived and intimated politely but earnestly, that he was hungry. The clerk was a practical joker.

"All right, Uncle Zach," he said, "I guess I can do something for you. The boss wouldn't like for any of his hands to be suffering for the lack of food. Here's a box of crackers and here's a new kind of soft cheese that we've just gotten in."

So saying, he handed the darkey a fifteen-cent can of axle grease.

"Just sit down yonder in the doorway," he added, "and spread that cheese on your crackers and go to it."

The old man thanked him and obeyed. He munched away steadily until the meal was finished. The axle grease tin had been wiped out clean when he rose to his feet and salvaged a few crumbs which had lodged on his shirt-front.

"Well, Uncle Henry," asked the joker, "how did you enjoy your snack?"

"Well, suh," said Uncle Henry, "dem crackers sho' wuz fine, but dat cheese, she acted to me lak she wuz jest a little bit ransom!"

§ 91 Life Everlasting

To myself I think of this story under the title "Life Everlasting." I understand it originated shortly after the close of the Civil War. I know that in my part of the country it has been doing service for as far back as I can remember. But perhaps there are some among the readers of this department, especially in the North, who have never heard it. And also there may be others who would like to hear again its familiar routine.

It would seem that a middle-aged Southerner of fine family came limping home after four years of service in the army to find himself practically ruined. Raiders had burned his house down, his people were scattered, his slaves had been freed, his plantation had gone to wrack and weeds. Out of the ruin only a few hundred dol-

lars were left. The veteran knew nothing of business but he did know horses. So he opened a livery-stable.

The industry did not prosper greatly. Most of his neighbors and practically all of his former comrades were themselves too needy to be able to afford even the occasional luxury of a hired vehicle. When they went anywhere, they went afoot. To pay his debts and keep the establishment running, the proprietor sold off his stock bit by bit until all that remained to him was one team of horses and a large covered wagon, used indifferently for transporting either passengers or freight. The gallant ex-warrior drove the rig himself; he had no money with which to hire a hand.

This, then, was his forlorn position when one day a bid for his professional services was made by a large coal-black person. There was to be a party for the newly-emancipated at the negro schoolhouse out in the country. A group of the local darkies wished to attend. They were willing to pay a good price for transportation to and from the scene of festivities.

The livery-stable owner succumbed to the temptation. It would be night-time when the celebrants left town. Probably no white person of his acquaintance would see him as he drove his patrons on their way. Anyhow, he hoped none would.

All went well until after the merrymakers had been delivered at the rendezvous. They flocked indoors to join the jubilating members of their race who had arrived earlier. The old soldier huddled himself down in his wagon and prepared for an all-night wait. But the time was winter-time and the weather was cold, very cold for that mildish climate. Also it was raining, and the white man, insufficiently clad and wet to the skin, soon began to suffer. Finally, when he was half-frozen, he made another tremendous compromise with his pride. He went inside to thaw out.

The place was packed with happy, perspiring, dancing colored people. The windows were tightly closed. In one corner of the room a stove was packed with light-wood knots and was roaring like a blast furnace. The heat was terrific. From between the floor boards dust lifted in clouds. The air was almost thick enough to be sliced with a knife.

The lone Caucasian wedged himself into a vacant space behind the stove. Presently the hot stove began to draw the moisture out of his shabby and worn garments; steam arose from him. At least, he was warm, even if he wasn't exactly comfortable.

The heat made him drowsy. His head nodded forward on his breast. A touch on his elbow awakened him to the consciousness that many eyes were turned upon him and that alongside him stood

the master of ceremonies, a very large, very sweaty individual who formerly had been a field-hand on a plantation adjoining his own.

"Kunnel," said this person, "'scuse me, suh, but I has been requested to ast you will you kin'ly be so good ez to step outside ag'in. Some of de ladies objects to de smell of hoss."

§ 92 Light on Dark Subjects

Around the clubs where the literati of New York congregate, a popular novelist has been telling a story at the expense of his wife.

"The Missis," he says, "is interested in reform movements. Not long ago she got all worked up on the subject of twilight sleep. At a coast resort where we stayed this summer the other guests found out her latest hobby and professed curiosity to know the workings of the system which was doing so much to alleviate the lot of mothers. So some of the women induced her to make a little talk to them on the subject.

"Now, my wife has never done any public speaking and the prospect rather frightened her. Still, she was game; she went through with it and delivered quite an address to a select audience.

"There was only one drawback to its complete success, and that was due, not to her lack of knowledge of the theme, but to her embarrassment. As a matter of fact, some of her hearers came away in a seeming state of bewilderment. You see, my wife's mistake was this: Every time she referred to Twilight Sleep she called it 'Daylight Savings'."

§ 93 A Long Distance from Home

The beauty of this story is that you may hang it upon any restaurant against which you happen to have a grudge.

The scene is a hotel dining-room. A gentleman is sitting alone, staring malignantly at an order of fried fish. His lips are moving.

The head-waiter, observing his attitude, approaches him in the deferential manner of a head-waiter.

"Is anything wrong, sir?" inquires the head waiter.

"Wrong?" says the customer; "certainly not."

"I thought you were saying something, sir?"

"I was. I've just been talking to this fish."

"Very good, sir—ha—ha—talking to the fish," chortles the waiter in a mirthless affectation of mirth. The point is not clear to him but

a proper consideration for the vagaries of patrons requires that he shall pretend that it is. Still chuckling emptily, he turns away.

"Hold on, there," says the customer. "Did you ever hear a fish talk? You didn't? Well, probably you wouldn't understand it, so I'll translate the conversation I just had. When the fish came on I said:

" 'How do you do?'

" 'I'm not feeling so good,' said the fish.

" 'You don't look so good,' said I. 'How are things down in the river?'

" 'I don't know,' replied the fish. 'I've been here for six weeks.' "

§ 94 A Crushing Blow for Waldo

The youth was named Waldo. He was eighteen. He was the only son of a widowed mother and the idol, as the saying is, of her eye. Thanks to her jealous care, he had remained through all his life unspotted by the world. He was as modest and as innocent as a properly reared maiden might have been.

When Waldo reached his eighteenth birthday his mother began to fear that sooner or later her boy must loosen the apron strings, by which she had, through all these years, bound him to her. He was beginning to manifest a lively desire for the company of other young people. She was apprehensive, and who could blame her? She had brought him up so carefully, had protected him from every sophisticating or disillusioning influence. But away from her protecting eye, who could tell what might occur to change his whole viewpoint?

A mother's intuition taught the good woman to be especially distrustful of a certain young lady of the neighborhood, a lively grass widow, by name Gertrude Ferguson. Yet Waldo, so young, so guileless, was drawn to Miss Ferguson even as the moth is drawn to the flame.

One evening Waldo put on his best and went calling. Following her invariable custom, his mother waited up for him. Usually when he returned home he came, beaming and happy, straight to her and told her of all that had taken place. But this night he burst in at the front door and, with a distracted mien and weeping as though his heart would break, he staggered into her presence and flung himself on his knees at her feet and buried his agonized face in her lap, while one tremor of distress after another ran through his slender, quivering frame.

"Oh, Mother," he cried out in muffled accents, "oh, Mother dear." For the moment he could say no more; his grief choked him.

She bent above him, filled with terrible fears.

"Waldo, my child, what is it, tell me?" she demanded. "Tell me what has happened and we will bear it together."

He raised his swollen, tear-stained face to hers. He clutched one of her hands in both of his.

"Mother," he gasped between sobs. "Gertrude says—Gertrude says——"

"Yes, yes," she cried, "go on!"

"Gertrude says there—there isn't any Santa Claus!"

§ 95 A Treat for the Victor

On his return from his first European visit, an American vaudeville actor was telling a group of his friends about what he had seen during the Continental tour.

"It was in Munich," he said, "that I saw a mighty interesting sight. I could appreciate it, coming from a country where all the breweries are closed down. It was the great triennial Bavarian beer-drinking match.

"There were fifty contestants, and an enormous crowd looking on. The prize went to the man who could drink the most glasses of Munich beer at a sitting. And the man who won drank thirty-seven glasses."

"What was the prize?" asked a hearer.

"A glass of Munich beer."

§ 96 Identifying the Deacon

The person who entered the office of the specialist in nervous disorders was an elderly man of a patriarchal aspect, wearing long white whiskers and garb of a semi-clerical cut. He was plainly very jumpy. His eye was bloodshot and his manner was apprehensive.

The physician diagnosed the caller's troubles at a glance, for he had had long experience with such. Nevertheless he sat in silence while the bearded one confessed that secretly he had been imbibing heavily and now craved expert help. He described his symptoms; they also had a familiar ring; especially when he reached the point where he mentioned having seen certain curious zoological specimens not visible to the eyes of any one else.

"Well, I guess we can fix you up all right," said the doctor. He wrote out a prescription, collected his fee, and then, as the patient started to leave, he said:

"Hold on a minute please. What is your name and your address?"

"But I have just paid for my treatment," protested the other.

"Quite so; but I have a book here where I keep a private record of all such cases for possible future reference. Anything you say to me of course will be a secret between us."

"But Doctor," said the stranger, "even in confidence I'd rather not tell who I am. I am an officer in a church and I tremble to think what would happen if this thing got out on me. Look how I'm trembling now at the very thought of it? Why I'd be ruined! My family do not suspect that I ever indulge in liquor; no one suspects it. I came to you because my condition scared me. My first name is Ezra, but I don't want to tell you what my last name is."

"Oh, very well," said the specialist. "I have a page in my little book for people like you. I enter them under a general heading as members of the Allcash family. I'll stick you in there. There's one consolation—you'll be in a very large and distinguished company."

He scribbled with his pen and this was his notation:

"Deacon Ezra Allcash, who fears the Lord and the d. t'.s. $10 (paid).

§ 97 A Whole Community Implicated

There is a special writer on one of the New York papers who, justly or unjustly, lacks popularity with some of his office associates. It is understood that he believes his confreres are envious and cannot appreciate true ability. On the other hand, they assign very different reasons for the estimation in which they—and to hear them tell it—many outsiders hold the genius.

One night the special writer, having finished his assignment, was lolled back in his chair, favoring the company with his views which, as a rule, are very pronounced.

From a nearby desk, an associate lifted a soured face.

"Blank," he said, "I'm going to tell you something. Some morning you're going to be found dead in bed, with your throat cut from ear to ear.

"And more than a million people in this town will be arrested for the murder!"

§ 98 The Plaint of a Shopper

A young Scotchman, methodical, painstaking, and sincere, as so many of his race are, had been a bachelor of long standing. Since coming to this country he had saved his money until now he felt he was qualified properly to support a domestic establishment. One day he went to a friend:

"I've about decided to get married," he said. "In fact, I'm looking around now for a wife."

"Where are you looking?" asked his friend.

"I'll tell you," said the Scot. "It's my belief that the girls who work as clerks in the big department stores here in New York, are mighty fine types. As a rule, they are well-dressed and tidy and good-looking and have nice ways. They must be self-reliant or they wouldn't be working. They have to be intelligent or they couldn't hold their jobs. They know how to make a dollar go a long distance, or they couldn't dress as well as they do on the modest wages most of them get.

"My notion is this: On pretext of wanting to buy something, I am going to tour the big shops until I see a girl behind a counter who seems to fill my requirements. Then I'm going to find out her name and make private inquiries as to her character and disposition, and if she answers all the requirements I'll secure an introduction to her and if she seems to like me I'm going to ask her to marry me."

Six months went by. The cautious Scot and the man to whom he had confided his plan of compaign met again. The latter thought his friend looked rather careworn and unhappy.

"How are you getting along?"

"Well," said the Scot, "I'm a married man, if that's what you mean."

"Well, did you follow the scheme you had in mind—I mean the one you told me about the last time I saw you?"

"Yes. I married a girl that worked at Macy's."

"Congratulations. How's everything getting along?"

The Scot fetched a small sigh.

"Sometimes," he said, "I can't help thinking that maybe I might have done better at Gimbel's."

§ 99 The Thoughtful Bridegroom

The East Side couple had just been made one. He was a promising member of the Pearl Button Kid's gang. She was one of the belles of the Avenue C. younger set.

As the pair came forth from under the marriage canopy the bridegroom, with the air of having just remembered something of importance, halted the beginning of the march to the nearby hall where the wedding reception was to take place. He swung his bride about so that she faced him. She stood with her lips puckered expectantly. But he did not kiss her. He hauled off, this forehanded young husband, and dealt her a resounding wallop upon the point of the jaw.

"There," he said, "that's for nothin'. Now be careful!"

§ 100 Sagacity Among the Dumb Brutes

I am given to understand that in the Old Country this story was told years and years ago. But it was new to me when I heard it recently. It may be new to some of the readers of this book. Anyhow I hope so.

It would seem that a parish priest in the County Mayo was walking along a road when he saw an angry-looking bull burst through a gap in a hedge and trot threateningly across the field where a peasant girl was milking a cow of a staid and venerable appearance.

The clergyman shouted a warning. The girl glanced up, then calmly went on with her milking.

The bull continued to advance. He snorted and pawed the earth and tossed his massive head. The alarmed cleric called out again to the imperiled young woman, bidding her run for safety.

She looked about, waved a hand reassuringly and bent again to her task. Just as the distressed onlooker was preparing to risk his own life by distracting the wrothy animal from the reckless colleen, the bull gave a final snort, turned off and lumbered back to his pasture.

The good father vaulted the hedge and proceeded to lecture the girl on her foolhardiness in face of a great peril. With an airy wave of her arm she interrupted him:

"Shure, your Riverince," she said, "I was in no danger whatsoiver."

"What makes you say that, you foolish child?" he demanded. "With my own two eyes didn't I see him charging down upon you. It was only by the mercy of Providence and my own quick prayers for your deliverance that he didn't stick you with both those long horns of his."

"Beggin' your pardon, Father," she said, "but that wasn't it at all. All along, from the first, I knew he wouldn't dare come nearer toward me."

"Why wouldn't he then?"

"He wouldn't come by reason of this cow bein' here all the while."

"And what had that old cow to do with it?" asked the astonished priest.

"She's his mother-in-law."

§ 101 What Love Will Do

Extremes are drawn to extremes—that is a well-known fact, and I cannot claim the honor of being the first to direct attention to it. But at least it does remind me of a story.

In the sideshow the romance had ripened. The midget fell in love with the giantess. She was nearly eight feet tall; he measured, from crown to toe, just thirty inches. But he had just as much love in his soul as though he weighed a ton.

However, the lady was coy; she had been properly raised. She wouldn't even let him hold her hand.

One Sunday morning in the spring, when the circus train was lying on a siding, the pair went for a stroll across the fields. As they walked in the green meadows the dwarf begged the lofty object of his affections for just one kiss. Finally she yielded to his importunities but in order for his eager lips to reach hers it would be necessary for her to kneel down. Merely bending over wouldn't do—there still remained a hiatus of at least a foot between her face and his upturned one.

And she absolutely declined to kneel. In the first place, the posture was not dignified, in the second place the ground was muddy and she had on her smartest walking-skirt, made to order for her by a concern specializing in tents and awnings And there was no fence or stile in sight upon which he might climb.

Desperation made the Lilliputian resourceful. Alongside a roadside blacksmith shop he spied an iron anvil. At sight of it inspiration came to him. He induced the fair one to back up against the side of the shop. He ascended the anvil and stood on tiptoe upon its flat top. Then, as she swayed downward from the lofty heights where her head customarily nodded, he was able to implant the first chaste salute of affection upon her maidenly mouth.

They continued upon their stroll, she stepping on with her splendid strides, he trotting alongside, his tiny figure half hidden behind her swishing draperies.

They went three miles further. Then he begged her for another kiss—just one more to seal the bargain of their hearts.

"No sir," she said, firmly, "one's enough for today."
"Just one," he pleaded.
"No."
"You mean it?"
"I do."
"Your decision is absolutely final?"
"Absolutely."
He fetched a deep sigh.
"Well then," he said resignedly, "such being the case, I don't suppose it's any use my carrying this damned anvil any longer!"

§ 102 Why Daniel Looks Happy

A reformed post-prandial orator—one who had taken the cure and remained cured—was talking to a group of us the other day.

"It wasn't that I got tired of hearing my own voice," he said; "few do. A man can get drunk on his own eloquence and become a confirmed inebriate. What checked me in my nefarious career was that I finally became cognizant, through the haze of vanity which had been blinding me, of the expressions that spread over the faces of the other guests when the toastmaster, making the introduction, pronounced my well-known name.

"In illustration of the point I'm trying to make, I may call your attention to an historic example. Have you fellows ever seen copies of that celebrated painting of Daniel in the Lions' Den? Did you happen to notice the happy, satisfied expression on the Prophet's face? You did, eh?

"Well, see that proves what I've been trying to say. Daniel looks pleased because he knows he's about to be present at one dinner where he won't have to listen to any of the after-dinner speeches."

§ 103 Favoring the Dark Meat

I believe that this one has seen honorable service in the college papers. But since many of us, unfortunately, are not college graduates and do not subscribe to a college magazine, it might be worth while to give the story circulation in other quarters.

It would seem that at a certain institution devoted to the higher learning there had been what is known in educational circles as a hazing. A Freshman was the victim and he complained to the faculty and the dean undertook an investigation. One of the first to

be summoned before him was a youth who owned up that he had participated in the festivities.

"Ah, ha!" snarled the dean. "You confess, then, that this inoffensive youth was carried by force to the campus fountain and there immersed?"

"Yes sir," said the culprit.

"And what part did you take in this disgraceful affair?"

"The right leg, sir."

§ 104 The Glacial Period

In the old and comparatively wide-open days, in Birmingham there was a professional gambler well known throughout Alabama and adjacent states, who rejoiced in the name of Colonel Doolove.

Poker was the Colonel's favorite indoor pastime. He preferred to play it with cards of his own choosing and, as a general thing, his luck was best when he was doing the dealing.

One night he had an engagement to play with several visiting sports. The others were known to be generous about raising and he anticipated both a pleasant and a profitable session.

Unfortunately the Colonel, in preparing for the festivities, made one grievous error. He entrusted to a subordinate the detail of arranging the stacked deck which at the opportune time would be introduced into the game. Now it so happened that the confederate nursed a grudge against his chief. He turned traitor. With glue he fastened the fifty-two cards tightly together and at an early state of the proceedings slipped them to the unsuspecting professional, who hid them in his lap.

The psychological moment arrived. There was a jackpot of augmented size and it was Colonel Doolove's time to deal. He coughed and bent forward to mask the movement and, deftly slipping the deck then in use under the table, made a lightning switch and brought forth the doctored cards.

With an adept hand he tried to deal. The top card resisted the pressure of his thumb. He tried again with no better results.

Suddenly he discerned that all eyes were focused upon him. An ominous silence had fallen; the pause was growing more and more embarrassing.

But the Colonel was not to be dismayed.

"Gentlemen," he said, and smiled a winning smile, "I wish to state that, man and boy, I've been running cold decks into poker games for nearly forty years but, by heavens, this is the first one I ever struck that was froze solid!"

§ 105 A Perfect Explanation

This one came out of Canada, having been related to me by volunteers who knew a good thing when they heard it.

The story runs that a gentleman is walking down the street. He has a fresh-made, ragged-looking scar on his forehead just below the hair line.

Another gentleman meets him—one with a well-deserved reputation for being concerned in other people's affairs. The inquisitive party immediately sees the wound on his friend's forehead. His interest quickens. Is it possible that the other man has been in a fight? Or did his wife bean him during a family argument, or what? He must find out immediately.

"I see you've got a pretty bad cut on your head," he says.

"Yep."

"Hum; looks as though you got a hard lick, someway?"

"Nop."

A pause.

"Well, how did it happen then?"

"Why, I must have bitten myself."

"You must have bitten——? Say, look here now, how could you bite yourself up there?"

"I guess I must have been standing on a chair."

§ 106 The Perfidity of the Scot

Among golfers this one is at present having a more or less deserved circulation.

A Yankee enthusiast on his return home from the grand tour was telling his friend of his experience on foreign links.

"Say," he said, "the Scotch are a mighty tricky race. You know what I mean—liars and that sort of thing."

"Surely not all of them," protested his audience.

"Well, I'm only going by a sample specimen that I ran into. He may not have been typical but I'll say this for him: he was a sharp practitioner. I met him one morning at a club in the Lowlands. I was looking for a partner and he seemed to be alone, too, so I said to him:

" 'What do you generally go around in?'

" 'Oh,' he said, 'about 105 or 106 when I'm on my game.'

" 'That's me, too,' I said, 'if I break 110 on any course I'm doing

pretty well. I guess we're pretty well mated. Suppose we play together for a shilling a hole?'

"Well, he took me up," continued the American, "and he turned out to be one terrible liar. Why, that Scotch son-of-a-gun made an eighty-two and I had to play my head off to take three shillings away from him."

§ 107 The Way It Looked to Mr. Dooley

One of the gifted females who first introduced interpretative dancing—whatever that is—into this country fleshened up considerably after the time of her initial terpsichorean triumphs among the society folk along the eastern seaboard. When, after several years' absence in foreign parts, she returned to this land she was the heavyweight champion of interpretative dancers. Nevertheless, she continued to give performances to select audiences of artistic souls.

Peter Dunne, the humorist, was lured to one of these entertainments. The lady, wearing very few clothes, and, as a result of their lack, looking even plumper than usual, danced in an effect of moonlight calcium beams.

As Dunne was leaving, one of the patronesses hailed him.

"Oh, Mr. Dunne," she said, "how did you enjoy the madame's dancing?"

"Immensely," said Dunne. "Made me think of Grant's Tomb in love."

§ 108 Inquiry Regarding the Authors

The old-time repertoire actor had been looking for a job for many a day, trying to keep up appearances with his one carefully pressed but well-worn suit, and subsisting on his knowledge of where the largest meal for forty cents could be found. When he was down to his last penny somebody told him of a vacancy in a small-town stock company thirty miles away and he borrowed the money to pay his railroad fare thither.

The resident stage-manager rubbed his hands gleefully at sight of the applicant.

"By gosh, I'm glad you turned up," he said, "you're just the man and just the type. We're going into rehearsal today for next week's bill, which is where I need you."

"Modern play, I suppose?" inquired the newcomer, thinking of his one suit and mindful, of course, of the rule that stock actors must furnish their own costumes.

"Sure," said the manager; "modern society drama."

"That's good," declared the old-timer, feeling much cheered. "I presume then that a simple garb will be ample?"

"Well, let's see now just what wardrobe you will need," said his new boss. "In the first act you will require a suit of tweeds. You are a rich mine-owner. The English syndicate calls you to London and so, in the middle of the act, you have to make a change for a suit that you would wear on a train. Also, as you have an ocean trip ahead of you, there must be something characteristic in the way of a long ulster. Possibly you might wear the ulster and carry a lighter coat.

"The second act finds you in the smoking room of Lord Worcestershire's mansion. You are telling the Englishman about the mine, and, as it is in the evening you will be in full dress, naturally.

"The third act shows his lordship's yacht anchored at Ostend, and here again your dress must be precise. I would suggest white flannel trousers, blue jacket, white shoes and something classy in the way of a cap.

"This takes us to the fourth act, the scene of which is the breakfast-room of a country house. It isn't necessary for me to tell you how to dress the part in this act. It is simply a matter of looking the part—rich mine owner, etc.; not letting any Englishman show you up in the matter of clothes."

"Say," demanded the veteran, "who wrote this show—Hart, Schaffner & Marx?"

§ 109 A Snare for the Stranger

Back in the old days when it still was possible legally to buy and sell practically all sorts of wild game in the open, a citizen of a remote county of my native state of Kentucky paid his first visit to a large city. He went on an excursion up to Cincinnati and put up at the old Burnet House.

When dinner time came—only, to my fellow-Kentuckian it was supper time—he entered the dining-room, treading high, wide and handsome and was assigned to a seat at a table, and after the waiter had elucidated for him the mysteries of an à la carte menu, he gave his order for a plentiful meal, regardless of expense.

But when he came forth into the lobby at the conclusion of the spread there was an expression of intense disappointment upon his rugged face, or upon such portion of his face as was visible above the timber-line where his whiskers left off.

A fellow-excursionist hailed him:

"What's the matter, Uncle Gabe?" he asked. "You look like you might be feeling put out about something or other."

"Son," said the old gentleman, "I am put out. I've been imposed on."

"What happened?"

"Well, all my life I've been hearin' fellers that had knocked about amongst these Yankees talkin' about quail on toast—sayin' how good it was and how tasty and all. So I made up my mind that ef ever I got to a big town I was goin' to have some of this here quail on toast, no matter how much it cost.

"Well, a little while ago I walked into the backroom of this here tavern to get me some vittles. And mighty near the first thing I seen when the nigger handed me the advertisement was 'Quail on Toast—eighty cents.'

"So I told him to bring me some right away. But, son, I figure they seen I was green and cheated me out of my eighty cents."

"How so?"

"Why, son, 'twasn't nothin' but a piece of scorched light bread with a patt'ridge on top of it."

§ 110 The Perils of Life Ashore

One of the officers of the United States steamer Leviathan had a pet cat. It selected one of the "thousand dollar" staterooms to give birth to kittens. Later, a sailor on board was heard talking to the mother.

"You're a fine kitty, ain't you?" he said reproachfully. "You'd ought to be ashamed of yourself—we give you shore leave and then look what happens."

§ 111 Living Proof

Complaint has been made that some of the so-called model houses which go up so fast in the suburban district of New York are built to be sold, not to be lived in.

Be that as it may, a little story is being told of a real-estate dealer whose operations in the commuting zone have been highly successful. The only trouble is that he can't work the same side of the street twice.

He had snared a prospective buyer—one of those ten-dollars-down-and-ten-dollars-a-week-as-long-as-you-live prospects—and in his car

the promoter took him out on Long Island to look at a cottage which he thought would just suit the needs of the customer.

The building was in the process of construction. It had been started on Monday; on Friday it would be ready for occupancy. But this was a Wednesday, and while the foundations were finished and the sides were up and the roof had been pasted on, the painting and the interior trim and the finishing touches were yet to be added. The dealer led the proposed victim inside the structure. The plasterers were just concluding their part of the contract.

"Now then," said the salesman, beaming with pride, "what do you think of this for a house?"

"Ain't she built kind of flimsy?" inquired the homeseeker.

"Flimsy? Flimsy?" screamed the indignant realtor. "You call this a flimsy job? Wait, I'll show you."

"Hey, Jim," he called to a workman on the other side of the partition.

"What?" asked Jim.

"Jim, step up close to the dividing wall between us. Get as close to it as you can."

"All right," said Jim; "here I am, almost touching it."

"Now, Jim, you can hear me speaking through the wall, can't you?"

"Sure."

"But you can't see me through this wall, can you Jim?"

"Nope."

With a smile of triumph and satisfaction the promoter turned to the customer:

"Now, that's what I call a wall!" he said.

§ 112 Something for the Marquis

In Pittsburgh a colored person ran a boxing club for the entertainment of members of his own race. The enterprise was shaky and one night the attendance was woefully bad.

This situation prompted deep thought. Having done his heavy thinking, the manager entered the ring and made an announcement.

"Gem'men," said he, "I've jest received a letter frum the Marquis of Queensbe'y tellin' me 'at I will have to send him twenty-five dollars fur the priv'lege of usin' his rules here tonight.

"The hat will now be passed!"

§ 113 A Tragedy at the Works

After Mr. Grogan had reported late for work several mornings, the boss of the roundhouse suggested to him that he buy an alarm clock. Grogan, who had lately come hither from a remote part of Ireland confessed he had never seen an alarm clock.

"Come with me," said the foreman that afternoon at quitting time. He led the greenhorn to a department store, picked out an alarm clock and explained the general plan of its workings to his new hand.

For several days the clock behaved perfectly. But one day during the father's absence one of the younger Grogans, being of an inquiring turn of mind, opened the case to study the device of the thing and removed some importants parts which he forgot to put back. Next morning the bell failed to ring and Mr. Grogan overslept.

He couldn't understand why his clock had betrayed him. On his own account he undertook an investigation. He took the back off the clock. Mixed up with the machinery was the mortal remains of a large cockroach.

" 'Tis no wonder the thing w'udn't run," said Mr. Grogan. "The engineer is dead!"

§ 114 What Makes the World Go Round

A party—a gay party—traveled to San Francisco in a private car. When their train arrived one of the travelers was in a highly jumpy state. He could hear brass bands whose playing was not audible to anyone else and it was with difficulty that he checked himself in an inclination to run out in the road and stop runaways that were not there.

But a day or two of rest put him in a slightly better nervous state. That is to say, he thought he was better until an evening when he heard newsboys calling an extra and left his hotel and went downstairs and outdoors to buy a paper. In a few minutes he tottered back in, wan and wild-eyed and sought his bed, after leaving a call for the house-physician.

Presently that gentleman was shown to the room.

"Doctor," said the visitor, "I'm in a terrible shape. I came out here with a gang of hellions and on the way I lapped up a good deal of liquor. I thought a little lay-off would fix me up but it didn't. I'm beginning to see things."

"For instance, what?" asked the physician, reaching in his kit bag for a hypodermic needle.

"Well, for instance, a little while ago I went down here to the corner below this hotel and I was standing there when all of a sudden I saw the Hearst building go up the street and the Call building swing around the corner out of sight."

The doctor put his little needle back in its case.

"Calm yourself," he said; "you were standing on a turn-table."

§ 115 The Unaccommodating Colored Brother

A Northern traveling-man dropped off a train at a small town in Georgia to stretch his legs. It was his first trip South and he was interested in the customs of the country and when he saw that there seemed to be considerable suppressed excitement in the vicinity of the station he was moved to inquire into the causes therefor. He picked out a determined-looking citizen and drew him to one side.

"Excuse me," said the drummer. "I'm a stranger in these parts and I don't wish to pry into other people's business, but it strikes me, from the looks of most of these people around here, that something must be afoot. Would you mind telling me what it is?"

"Well," said the native, "in confidence I'll let you in on the secret. Some of the boys are fixing to go uptown and get a bad darkey and hang him. Did you ever see a lynching?"

The Northerner shook his head.

"Well, then, why don't you stay over and go along with the boys?" pressed the hospitable Southerner.

"Well, I'd hardly care to do that, being a complete stranger and all," stated the traveler, "but I wouldn't mind looking on during the actual hanging."

"Well, that might be fixed up, too," said the accommodating citizen. "Tell you what—you just grab your bags off the car and wait over for the next train. You don't have to leave the depot. I'm actin' as a sort of leader of this here mob and the boys will do purty near anything I want 'em to do. So after we get our man, we'll just bring him down here where you are and you can have a front seat while we're swinging him up."

So the traveling man dragged his hand luggage off the train and piled it on the platform and sat down on a handy baggage truck to wait.

The lynchers banded together and trudged away over the hills. Half an hour passed and then the leader returned alone. There was a look of deep chagrin on his face.

"Mister," he said, addressing the visitor, "I'm terribly sorry to have to disappoint you but I'm afraid there won't be any hanging today."

"What's the matter?" inquired the Northerner. "Did the mob relent?"

"Oh, no, nothing like that," said the Georgian, "But to tell you the truth, the dam' nigger backed out on us."

§ 116 A Fact Driven in Forcibly

The lawyer for the plaintiff in the damage suit apparently had reason to suspect that somebody connected with the defense had been monkeying with one of the witnesses opposing his side.

"Look here now," he said severely, and aimed an accusing finger at the person on the stand. "You realize, don't you, that you have taken an oath to tell the truth?"

"I sure do," answered the individual under fire.

"All right, then. Now I want to know if you know the meaning of the word 'collusion'?"

"Soitin'ly! I was in one once't on the B. & O."

§ 117 He'd Just Found It Out Himself

In the old days before the justly-celebrated Eighteenth Amendment went through, two Northerners, visiting in New Orleans, visited a certain establishment then famous but now, alas, gone forever, where a special variety of exceedingly tasty—and exceedingly potent—cocktail was served. Neither of them had ever sampled this concoction but they had heard it very highly spoken of. Their experiment proved satisfactory in every respect.

They drank their orders down, then called immediately for more of the same. The second service seemed to call for a third, but the gentlemanly barkeep raised a warning hand.

"No, no, gents," he said. "I'm sorry, but we never give a customer more than two of those drinks. They're pretty strong."

"Just one more, please," pleaded one of the patrons.

"Can't be done, it's against the rules of the house," said the attendant. "I'd advise you gentlemen to go along now and take a little stroll in the fresh air. You'll feel better for it."

After further fruitless argument the visitors departed into the night, arm in arm. Presently as they progressed along a dark and

quiet side street on legs which suddenly had grown somewhat unsteady, one of the pair said:

"Say, listen, don't you hear footsteps behind us?"

The other hearkened.

"B'leeve I do," he said. "What of it?"

"Why, it might be somebody following us."

"Well, what of that?"

"But it might be a footpad."

"Well, let him do his worst. He don't know there're eight of us!"

§ 118 The World Moves Slowly

Late in life Great-aunt Peabody came down from her New Hampshire farm to visit her niece in New York. A week of sight-seeing culminated in a theatre party.

The choice of the play was left to the guest of honor. She chose a revival of "The Merchant of Venice." Thirty years before she had attended a performance of that play and all through her days in the country she had cherished a desire some day to witness another rendition of the piece which in her youth had made so profound an impression upon her.

As the curtain fell on the last act one of the group turned to ask what she thought of the production as compared with the one she had witnessed back in 1895.

"Well," answered Mrs. Peabody, "so far as Venice is concerned they seemed to have made some very nice improvements in it. But that Shylock is still just the same grasping, miserable creature that he used to be."

§ 119 An All-Day Job

T. Roy Barnes is almost as well known as a story-teller as he is as an actor and movie star.

Here is one which he has told with tremendous success at Hollywood dinners:

"A little boy had been absent a whole day from school and the teacher next morning sent him home to get an excuse from his mother. Presently he came running back and handed the paper to his teacher. It read as follows:

"Dear Teacher: Please excuse Tommy from being away yesterday. He got wet in the A.M. and had to be dried in the P.M."

§ 120 In the Midst of a Great Grief

Why do they always lay them on the Scotch? I have asked this question before. By reason of the character of this story, I am prompted to ask it again.

It is alleged that an Aberdonian awoke one morning to find that during the night his wife had died. After one glance at the stark form lying there beside him, he leaped out of bed and ran into the hall.

"Mary," he called down to the general servant in the kitchen, "come to the foot of the stairs, quick."

"Yes!" she cried. "What is it?"

"Only one egg for breakfast this morning!"

§ 121 Race Feeling

Tom Masson, who makes it a part of his business annually to compile the best jokes of the previous year stands sponsor for this one; which like its immediate predecessor, has a Scotch background.

Four separate wrecks had cast up four men on a lonely island of the South Seas. Two were Scotchmen, the other two were Englishmen. After several years a passing steamer hove to and took the four aboard. Sandy and Donald were escorted to the skipper's cabin, there to tell their experiences. Sandy said:

"It would grieve you, mon, to see the Englishmen. Never a word did they speak all the time they were there for they were not introduced."

"And hoo did ye lads mak' oot?" inquired the skipper, who also was a Scot.

"Aye, mon, the verra dee I found Donald on the beach we organized a Caledonian league, a golf club, a debating society and a Preesbyteerian church."

§ 122 The Important Thing to Know

The insurance agent was calling professionally upon the proprietor of a small retail clothing store down on the water front. We shall call the latter Mr. Blank.

"Mr. Blank," began the visitor, "I've dropped in to talk to you about your insurance."

Mr. Blank raised a face on which hostility with just a trace of apprehension was depicted.

"What about my insurance?" he demanded, harshly. "If you're coming here to bother me about the last time I got burned out why I positively ain't got no time to waste on you."

"It isn't that at all," the solicitor hastened to say reassuringly. "Your most recent loss was adjusted very satisfactorily to all concerned. The company paid your claim and that's all there is to that. I believe you're very well covered against damages by fire?"

"You bet you I am."

"So I presumed. But it just occurred to me a few minutes ago that you ought to have some tornado insurance."

"What's that?" inquired Mr. Blank, coming around from behind the counter with the light of interest in his eyes.

"Well, it protects against any injury to your stock, fixtures or buildings by wind storms. It costs very little comparatively and it may pay you very big. For example, if a gale rips a few shingles off your roof, you collect. If the rain pours in through the hole and wets your goods you collect some more."

"You said sufficient," stated Mr. Blank. "I take some policies of that there tornado insurance right away. But hold on!" He approached the agent, sinking his voice to a confidential tone. "First I got to ask you a question: How do you start a tornado?"

§ 123 Advice to the Taxicabby

The dear old lady was just in from the country. This was the first time in many years that she had visited the great city. And it was the first time in her whole life that she had ridden in a taxicab.

As the taxi swung away from the station and began to weave its way through the traffic she noted with growing alarm that the driver kept removing one hand from the steering-wheel and putting it outside the car. When he had negotiated the turning of the third corner, each time repeating this movement, the passenger could contain herself no longer.

She bent forward and tapped him on the shoulder with a determined forefinger.

"Young man," she said, "you look after the driving and watch where you're going. I'll tell you when it starts raining."

§ 124 A Question and an Answer

Mr. Stein met Mr. Rabinowitz on the street.

"Hello, Mo," greeted the former. "I ain't seen you for so long a time, ut all. Where haf you been?"

"I haf been in the county jail," stated Mr. Rabinowitz, simply and sorrowfully.

"Oi, oi!" cried out Mr. Stein, commiseratingly. "Vot crime you been committing, huh?"

"No crime ut all. For nothing they put me in jail."

"You speak foolishness," said Mr. Stein. "This ain't Russia. In America to go to jail you must commit something."

"I didn't commit something," repeated the late captive sadly. "I don't commit nothing."

"Vell, vot happens? Tell me!"

"Vell, I am a vitness by a lawsuit."

"Ah!" cried the astute Mr. Stein. "It was for false swearing they send you to jail. You perjured yourself, huh?"

"No," said his friend. "I don't never purge. I don't do nothing, I tell you. All vot happens is that I am a vitness by a lawsuit. And I get on the stand and sit down and the lawyer he says: 'Vot, please, is your name?' And I say, 'My name is Moses Rabinowitz.' Then he says: 'Vot is your business?' And I says: 'I am a presser of pants.' And then the judge says to me: 'Are you Jewish?' And I says: 'Judge, for God's sake don't be a dam' fool!'"

§ 125 A Historic Warning

The young lady who officiated as treasurer of the moving-picture palace did not hand the patron his correct change. In fact, she did not hand him any change whatsoever. The patron in question was connected with a visiting street carnival and during a free afternoon had decided to patronize the affiliated arts.

"Hold on there, sister," he said, stooping to address the ticket seller through the slot in the wicket. "You're shy ten cents."

"I never make such mistakes," said the girl austerely.

"Well, you did this time," he answered. "I slipped you a quarter and that card up yonder says 'Admission Fifteen Cents.' I've still got a dime coming."

"No, you haven't either," she answered. "That's a box seat you've got."

"Nix on any box seat for me," he stated firmly; "that's the way they croaked Lincoln!"

§ 126 A Time to Take to Cover

You may choose for the setting of this story a bit of Scotland, a remote corner of interior New England or any other place where

the dwellers are supposed to be inclined to save the pennies.

A stranger arrives in this community, wherever it is. A native takes him in hand.

"You'll enjoy seeing our village," says the resident. "It's one of the most beautiful small towns in this country. Come along with me."

So together they make the tour—past vine-clad cottages, through the quaint old public square, along shady, sleepy streets and roads.

The visitor is filled with admiration. But he is struck by one curious feature. The place seems empty. No human life stirs in the streets. Once or twice he catches a glimpse of a face from a window as he passes and occasionally a furtive figure may be seen half hidden behind some building.

When the last sight has been seen the stranger turns to his guide.

"Well, it's a picturesque spot, indeed," he says; "but doesn't anybody live here?"

"Why, certainly, somebody lives here," says the inhabitant; "we have a population of over two thousand."

"Well, where is everybody then?" inquires the visitor pointing to the apparently deserted business center.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you: This is Tag Day for our United Charities Fund."

§ 127 Barring a Common Nuisance

Somebody, as has been so aptly said, is always taking the joy out of life.

In illustration of this regrettable fact I am reminded of a story which was credited to the late "Private John" Allen of Mississippi, the wit of the Lower House of Congress in which he served several terms.

One summer, Allen and several of his cronies were organizing a fishing expedition to a lake in Mississippi famous for the size and number of the large-mouthed black bass it contained. They had arranged for supplies and for transportation and for a camping site, for one darkey to do the cooking and for another to mix the mint juleps and the toddies. Now the personnel of the party was being completed.

"How about asking Davis to go along?" suggested one of the original organizers.

"No, sir!" stated Private John emphatically. "If Davis is invited you fellows can count me out."

"Why, I thought you liked Davis," said the proposer.

"I do like him in his proper place," explained Allen. "Ordinarily, Davis is a good citizen and good company. He's companionable, kind-hearted, genial and unselfish. He's a good Democrat and he was a brave Confederate soldier. But he wouldn't do for a trip such as this one is going to be. I've been on fishing trips with him before now where he spoiled everything. He lacks a sense of proportion."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean this: Just about the time the drinks are flowing freely and the poker game is under way and everybody is settling down for a nice pleasant time, that derned fool will want to go fishing."

§ 128 The Easiest Thing He Did

Sounds betokening intense infantile grief caused the passing lady to halt in front of a simple cottage. On the uppermost step of the house sat a small boy. Tears coursed down his cheeks and from him issued a series of heart-broken howls.

"Oh, dear me," said the lady, "poor little fellow! What's the matter?"

"Oh-h-h!"—the youngster broke a long-drawn wail off short and sniffled deeply and checked his sobbing. "Daddy and Maw won't take me to the movies tonight. And I want to go to the movies tonight. Oh-h-h! Wow-w-w!"

"But don't cry so," advised the sympathetic one. "Do they ever take you when you cry like that?"

"Sometimes they do and sometimes they don't," explained the child. "But it ain't no trouble to yell!"

§ 129 Tricks of the Trade

Once upon a time I enjoyed the acquaintance of a street-fair worker who gave up barking for Uno the Snake-Eater to run a hot dog stand. He made it pay, too, until imitators began to copy his methods and so spoiled the game.

But for awhile the customers swarmed thick about his sidewalk establishment, and trade among his rivals in the same line languished. The rivals couldn't understand it at first and neither could I until the busy merchant in confidence explained things to me.

"The secret," he said, "of my success is that I sell two frankfurters for the price of one. Naturally, that brings the custom to me and takes it away from my competitors along the line."

"How can you afford to do it?" I asked.

"I can't and I don't," he paradoxically replied.

"But you just said——"

"Hold on," he broke in; "let me explain: In my left hand you see me holding up a roll with the tips of two frankfurters sticking out at one end of it. You see me spread the mustard and pile the sauerkraut on the top frankfurter and you see me hand it over to the sucker. Well haven't you noticed that nearly always he comes back in a minute and complains that when he started to eat it he found only one frankfurter in the roll?"

"Yes, but you explained to him that in the crowd somebody must have jostled his arm so that one of the frankfurters slipped out and fell on the ground and was trampled into the dust."

"So I did, but that was part of the plan. The rest was sleight-of-hand. Look here." He held up his left hand. "Do you observe that I have no nail on my left thumb? It was mashed off years ago and never grew back. And do you also observe that my thumb is painted a rich dark brown with iodine?"

"Yes."

"Well, when a sucker buys two frankfurters one of those frankfurters is my thumb."

§ 130 Appealing to His Better Self

The late Tom O'Connor of San Francisco, who at the time of his sudden death a few years ago was one of the most brilliant young criminal lawyers on the Pacific Coast, assured me that this story was of actual occurrence.

A venerable gentleman was elected county judge up in an interior county of Northern California on the strength of the fact that he had a kind and gentle disposition and despite the fact that he knew very little about the law.

He had been on the bench only a few weeks when a crime which stirred the entire community was committed. A Mexican youth fell out with his aged mother and father. So he took an ax and while they slept he chopped both his parents up into bits.

He was captured red-handed and confessed and at once was brought before the new county judge to be held for the grand jury. The attorney for the state described the double murder in detail and then, according to formula, asked that the prisoner be committed to jail without bail.

Through the recital His Honor had been uttering little distressed

clucking sounds. But now it dawned upon him that he was expected to say something.

He fixed his eyes upon the callous face of the defendant and in a gently reproachful tone spoke as follows:

"Now, look here, son, you know you ain't been acting right!"

§ 131 A Little Tribute to Harvard

Heywood Broun, the New York critic, is a Harvard man. One time he had occasion to review a book written by a Yale man, with another Yale man for its hero.

The hero was all a hero, too. He was the captain of the Yale football team and, according to the author, invincible on the field and magnificent off of it. For instance, in an early chapter, it was told how the football captain while walking along a street of New Haven saw a little crippled newsboy try to cross the trolley tracks on his crutches just as a car came whizzing along. Suddenly the lad slipped on the icy asphalt and fell between the rails. He was about to be crushed beneath the wheels when the gallant collegian, at peril of his own life, leaped from the sidewalk, snatched the form of the helpless urchin up in his arm and bounded safely aside just as the car whizzed past.

Broun, in his review, quoted the description of this stirring scene and went on to say that it reminded him a somewhat similar incident which occurred at Cambridge when he was an undergraduate there.

The conditions were almost identical, he said, except that it was a much larger type of interurban trolley. It was also traveling a little faster than the New Haven car did, and there was a small baby that fell right in front of the approaching car, when who should come along—not the captain of the Harvard team but merely the substitute end of the second eleven.

"Did he pick the child up from the track in front of the car?" Broun paused to ask.

"He did not. He tackled the trolley car and threw it back for a loss of ten yards."

§ 132 Cutting Out the Minor Technicalities

The story runs that a young Englishman lately settled in Montana was trying to inject a little spice of novelty into the sports and pastimes of his simple ranch hands. Besides, he craved an oppor-

tunity to take part in some of the lusty, heart-warming games of his native land.

So he ordered an equipment of supplies from an Eastern sporting goods house. While waiting for the consignment to arrive he decided to save time by instructing his force in the rudiments of one of his favorites, to wit: socker football.

So one afternoon when work was slack he called the cowboys about him and divided them off, tentatively, into two squads of equal numbers. Then he proceeded to outline the principal rules.

"It's quite simple, you see," he said in conclusion. "After all, the main point is to kick the ball. And in scrimmages if the ball isn't available you kick a member of the opposing team. Get the notion?"

"Sure," came in a chorus from the novices.

"Well, then," said their employer, "we shall be ready to proceed as soon as the ball arrives."

"To hell with the ball," shouted one husky enthusiast; "'let's start the game."

§ 133 Preparedness

One day, when the question of America's unpreparedness in the event of another great war came up, Senator Tom Heflin of Alabama was reminded of a story.

"Once upon a time," said Heflin, "there was an old fellow down in the mountains in the northern part of my state who had to do his drinking on the sly. His wife had scruples against the use of intoxicants in any form. So he kept a jug of moonshine in a hollow log out in the woods. About once in so often he would slip away for a swig. One evening, feeling low in his mind, he took several good long swigs. Just as he was letting the fourth drink filter slowly down his throat he felt something brush against his foot. He looked down and there, almost touching him, was a six-foot diamond-back rattler coiled and ready to strike.

"He took another deep draught and then lowering the jug, he voiced his defiance:

" 'Strike, dern you, strike,' he bade the snake; 'you'll never find me better prepared than I am right now!' "

§ 134 The Correct Definition

It is no secret that regarding the application of the election laws in certain of the Southern states there is a wide flexibility. On the

same day and at the same balloting place it may be comparatively easy for an illiterate white man to qualify for the right of suffrage and comparatively difficult for a black brother to achieve the same end.

As a consequence, in some districts the colored brother goes fishing on Election Day. But, according to E. K. Means, the novelist, it so happened that last November at a polling booth in Lousiana a negro appeared. Under the literacy test, so-called, the judges of election proceeded to put him through an examination touching on his fitness. The applicant answered several casual questions correctly. His inquisitors held a brief private consultation. Then the clerk shot this one at him:

"What does 'Aurora Borealis' mean?"

The candidate flinched slightly, then picked up his hat and as he started for the door he answered:

"Boss, hit means dat I ain't gwine git to vote."

§ 135 A Meeting in Foreign Parts

Once upon a time there was a negro follower of the racing game who, on the last day of racing at St. Louis, lost all his money in a crap game. That same night the string of horses whose fortunes he followed were about to be shipped to Montreal for a meeting scheduled to begin the following week.

The black gamester had no reserve funds to fall back on. What was worse he had no credit. But by hook or crook he felt he must get to Montreal. Sticking with the ponies was the only religion he knew. He had been barred from the stock cars, though. In the emergency he appealed to a white man.

"Boss," he inquired, "which way is dis here Canady?"

"Due north," stated his adviser.

"Right up de river frum yere?"

"That's the idea, right up the river."

"Den ef a feller wuz to git in a skiff and start pullin', all he'd have to do to git dere would jest be to keep on rowin', is dat right?"

"Yep. But it's a pretty good distance."

Dats all right. I's a purty good hand wid de oars. Over in Bowling Green, Kintucky, whar I comes frum, dey wuzn't nobody could pull a boat any faster'n whut I could."

When darkness fell, the adventurer stole down to the water-front, found somebody's skiff unlocked and, what was luckier still, found a pair of oars hidden under a lumber pile nearby. Very silently he

embarked and through the hours that ensued he rowed with steady strokes. But what he did not know was that by reason of a terrific current in the Mississippi he was barely holding his own. Indeed, toward daylight as his muscles tired, he began to lose ground. His skiff slipped downstream foot by foot, but he, oblivious of all else, doggedly tugged back and forth.

At sun-up one of the stable-hands who was waiting at the wharf for a belated steamer which would carry him to his former home up the river for a visit to his folks, saw, a hundred yards out from shore, a familiar figure.

"Hello, Eph," he hailed; "whar you bound fur?"

Eph raised a wearied, astonished head.

"Law's sake!" he exclaimed, peering through the uncertain light. "Who is dat knows me away up yere in Montreal, Canady?"

§ 136 Where Silence Was Vitriol

A certain distinguished clergyman was playing a twosome with a gentleman addicted to profanity. At every bad stroke—and there were many such—the latter cut loose, poisoning the slumbrous autumnal air with robust cuss-words. The reverend opponent was also off his game but he said not a word, merely locking his lips together tighter and tighter.

At the tenth hole the layman went all to pieces. Following the ninth stroke, as his ball soared out of one bunker to pass over the green and descend in another bunker on the far side, he flung down his club, danced in the sandpit in impotent rage and spouted forth his entire vocabulary. When comparative calm had returned to him, he turned to his antagonist.

"Dominie," he asked, "with all due respect to your cloth, I don't see how you do it. Tell me how it is humanly possible even for a minister of the gospel to keep from swearing on a golf course once in a while anyhow?"

"My dear sir," said the cleric, "when I finally reach the stage where I simply cannot contain myself any longer, I turn my head and spit. And where I spit the grass never grows again!"

§ 137 A Rebuff for the Temptress

A lady entertaining two other ladies for luncheon at a New York hotel summoned a messenger to buy three seats for a matinée, with

the injunction that he was to secure aisle seats. The messenger, who was green, obeyed orders literally. He presently returned with three aisle seats, on the perpendicular instead of the horizontal.

The hostess seating herself in the rear of her guests, was possessed with the idea that she might persuade her nearest male neighbor to exchange his seat with one of her friends in front.

She bent her head sidewise and in an ingratiating whisper said: "Excuse me, are you alone?"

There was no answer; the stranger continued to stare straight ahead.

Thinking he might be slightly deaf, the lady raised her voice slightly, at the same time gently jogging his elbow: "Are you alone?"

From under cover of a program the answer came in a husky, guarded undertone: "Fly away, Birdie. The whole dam' family's here wit' me!"

§ 138 It Covered the Case

Harry Stevens, the famous New York caterer, who feeds the crowds at baseball parks and racetracks and horseshows and automobile shows all over the country, is naturally interested in the subject of foods. He knows good cooking and loves good cooking too.

It was with a touch of regret in his voice, here the other day when the subject which is so close to his heart was being discussed by a small group gathered in his offices on Fifth Avenue, that he said:

"One of the best cooks I ever knew was by birth an Englishman, as I am. He worked in a small hotel in a small town out in Ohio. His particular specialties were broiled beefsteaks and grilled mutton-chops. Smart people would travel considerable distances to have him cook meals for them. He knew the tastes of his regular patrons and when they intrusted him with an order they were sure of getting exactly what they wanted. As I say, it was a small town where he lived and he was its most prominent institution.

"But that's not what I started out to tell about. What I started out to tell about was about his death and what happened shortly afterwards. He had one temperamental drawback, this cook did, and it was his undoing. He drank and he drank hard. One night after he had imbibed heavily, the hotel caught fire and was destroyed. In the ruins they found his body, burned to a crisp.

"Some of his friends and admirers thought that the memory of such a genius should be perpetuated. So, among themselves, they

took up a collection for the purpose of erecting a monument over his grave. Here a question arose—what words to carve on the shaft. First one would suggest an inscription and then another.

"An old ex-Confederate from down South somewhere, was present as a bystander during the discussion. For a while he listened in silence to the argument. Then he spoke up:

" 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'one moment, if you please. Pardon me if I present an idea. As I understand it, what you gentlemen desire is a single line of the Scriptures which will sum up the entire character of the late lamented, if possible—his vocation, the manner of his death and the estimation in which he was held by his friends. Am I right?'

" 'You are,' said one of the party; 'but that's rather a large order to compress into one line, isn't it?'

" 'Not at all,' said the Southerner. 'I've just thought of one and have jotted it down on this bit of paper.'

"He handed the paper over and the others read it and adopted the suggestion by acclamation. What he had written was this:

" 'WELL DONE, THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT!' "

§ 139 A Proud Day for Any Gladiator

There was a barkeep in Cleveland who was not particularly distinguished for his prowess in combat. Some rough-and-ready boys —this of course was before Prohibition, when many people still drank, and there were rough-and-ready boys—frequented the establishment where he officiated and these patrons showed contempt for this reluctance on his part about grabbing the bung-starter and wading into the mess when the trouble broke out.

It is possible that their twitting got on Fred's nerves; his name was Fred. One evening, when a group of the regular customers had gathered, Fred took advantage of a lull in the conversation to present his personal claims for consideration.

"Say," he began, "some of you fellows seem to have the idea that I ain't much of a scrapper. Well, you ought to have been here last night, then. You'd 'a' seen a job of bouncing that would 'a' made you open your eyes. I done it single-handed too, all by myself, without nobody to help me."

"Or, in other words and to make it plain so we can all understand you, you handled the job alone," spoke up a hearer with a gift for irony.

"You get it," said Fred proudly. "Without no assistance from no source whatsoever, I chucked that bum out."

"What bum?" asked another interested auditor.

"I'm fixin' to tell you. Well, I was on watch about eleven o'clock and there was nobody only me in the place, when in comes this here guy. I don't know his name but I've seen him hangin' around this corner several days, and right from the first I sized him up for a no-good bum. Well, he'd been gittin' his snout full somewhere and he started right away gittin' fresh same as if he owned this liquor store. I called him down and he cussed me out, and with that I went for him bare-handed. Yes, sir, that's just whut I done. I didn't hesitate a minute—just waded right into him.

"He was a lot taller than me, but that didn't make no difference the way I was feelin' just then. I made a pass for him but he had the longest reach and I couldn't get inside his guard. I ain't had much experience at scrappin' but the idea come to me to grab him and trip him and roll him on the floor. Still, he looked too big for that.

"Then I remembered hearin' one of you fellows say once that in a situation like that the best thing to do was to play for the other guy's wind. So I bored in and feinted with my left at his chin and he throwed up both hands to parry and I socked him with my right in the bread-basket and he doubled up like one of these here carpenter's rules. So, just to make sure, I handed him another on the jaw and he was through. I dragged him out to the door and throwed him on the sidewalk and I says to him, I says: 'Now, you big stiff, I reckon you'll know better after that.'

"And then I came back and got his crutches and his tray of shoelaces and throwed them out, too."

§ 140 Simple, Unpretentious—but Complete

As the story runs, there used to be a permanent resident of our state asylums who all at once fancied himself a painter. Up until that time he had rather leaned to the theory that he was Napoleon Bonaparte. But now quite suddenly he decided that he was intended to depict important historical episodes with pigment and brush.

In such privacy as the management afforded, he fitted himself up with a studio. The management provided him with supplies. After some weeks he announced that he was prepared to hold a private unveiling of his first masterpiece. He invited the superintendent of the asylum to be his chief guest on that occasion.

At the appointed moment he brought forth a large frame shrouded in cloth. Having placed it where the light would bring out the best values of the composition, he removed the cover with a flourish. There was revealed a stretch of canvas untouched by so much as a single brush stroke.

"Now," said the artist, with pride in his voice, "what do you think of that for a beginning?"

"Very fine," said the tactful superintendent. "But pardon me, what does it represent?"

"Why, don't you see? That represents the passage of the Children of Israel through the Red Sea."

"But where is the sea?"

"It has been driven back."

"And where are the Israelites?"

"They have crossed over?"

"But the Egyptians—how about them?"

"They have not yet arrived."

§ 141 Following His Former Trade

Two actors sat on the seasands at Long Beach watching the bathers. There was one among the latter who won their admiration by his expertness.

This person looked like an Indian. He was middle-aged and corpulent but for all that he excelled all others in sight. He dived beautifully and swam like a swan. But where he particularly shone was at treading water. Holding his head and shoulders above the surface he literally walked back and forth through the surf.

"Wonder, isn't he?" stated the first spectator.

"It doesn't surprise me," said the second. "He's only doing what you'd expect him to do. He used to be a letter-carrier in Venice."

§ 142 Scientific Training

Mr. Ferguson was approached by his son, Edgar, age eight, who said he wished to collect something. All the other boys of his group were collecting things—postage stamps or botanical specimens or birds' eggs or what-not, and by their examples his own ambitions had been fired.

"Well now," said Mr. Ferguson, "that's a bully idea, my son. It's great for a boy of your age to have a fad. In fact, it's great for everybody to have a fad. But if I were you I'd go in for something that would keep you outdoors and give you a love of

nature. Who knows—you might grow up to be a naturalist!"

"Well, there's bird eggs," suggested Edward. "Billy Erwin, he's collecting bird eggs."

"No, that's cruel," said his father. "We've almost wiped out some of our song birds. What you should do is to protect birds' nests, not rob them."

"Well, how about dried flowers and leaves and grass and stuff like that?"

"No, I don't believe I'd recommend that, either," said Mr. Ferguson. "Not that there's anything wrong with it, but botany always seemed to me to be a hobby better suited for little girls than for little boys. Let me see, now?—I've got it. Why don't you go in for butterflies and moths? They are pretty to look at—moths are—and there are ever so many different varieties of them and they produce noxious worms, most of them."

The notion appealed to his son. It would be a novelty anyhow; none of the other boys were going in for that sort of thing.

"But you want to go at it scientifically," counselled Mr. Ferguson, when this decision had been reached. "You'll need a cabinet and a lot of other supplies. And you'll also need to read up on the subject. Suppose you run down to the public library and ask Miss Brown, the librarian, to let you see the list of books devoted to natural history subjects and you pick out the right ones and bring me the titles and I'll order them for you."

Fired with enthusiasm, Edgar marched away. In an hour he was back.

"Miss Brown wasn't there, father," he said. "Nobody was there except the janitor. But he knew you were a subscriber and he let me look at all the books on the shelves. But he didn't know where the special books on natural history were. So I just looked first one place and then another. But I only found one book that might help me. I put the name of it down."

"Well, now, that shows sense," said Mr. Ferguson, admiringly. "You've made a beginning anyway. What is it called?"

Edgar produced a scrap of paper and from a glance at what was written there refreshed his memory:

"It's called 'Advice to an Expectant Moth-er.'"

§ 143 What Do You Do with Your Whiskers?

"Mister," said the sweet-faced little urchin, addressing the aged gentleman, "could I ask you a question?"

"Certainly, my child," said the old man in a benevolent tone, at the same time stroking the splendid white beard which foamed from his chin and cascaded down his front almost to his middle.

"It's about your whiskers," said the inquisitive lad.

"Well, what about my whiskers?"

"When you go to bed at night do you tuck your whiskers under the bedclothes or do you let them spread out on top of the coverlid?"

The old man gave a start.

"Why, bless my soul," he said, "I don't believe I know. I've been wearing this beard for a great many years and until this moment it never occurred to me to remember just what I did do with my whiskers when I went to bed. To-night I'll take note, and I'll let you know the very next time I see you. Curious thing, eh what?" added the venerable one as he walked away shaking his head in perplexity.

That evening when he retired he pulled the counterpane quite up to his chin, hiding all the whiskers except their beginnings.

"Now, there," he said to himself, "that's undoubtedly the way I've been doing all these years. See how force of habit operated to cause me to put them inside the blankets. Ah—now I'm comfortable."

But in a moment he realized that he wasn't comfortable. His whiskers tickled his bare throat. He felt self-conscious, ill-at-ease.

So he heaved his whiskers out and spread them, spraying in a broad fan-shaped effect, upon the coverlid.

"Ah," he said, "that's better. That must have been the way I've been doing it."

But he couldn't sleep. His beard, stretching before him in plain view, was for the first time in his life an incumbrance and an annoyance.

So he drew them back in again. Then he hauled them out. Then he put them in again; then he put them out again, groaning meanwhile. All night long he shifted his whiskers and got not a wink of sleep. And the next night it was the same maddening thing over again—no rest for the poor harassed, half-frantic old gentleman. And the third night was a hideous repetition of the two preceding ones.

So, on the fourth night, in stark desperation he cut his throat and blew out his brains and hanged himself and jumped into the river.

And the moral is that curious little boys should never ask nice old gentlemen what they do with their whiskers at night.

§ 144 Nothing But Efficiency

The owner of a big textile plant hired one of these so-called efficiency sharps to cut down waste, and speed production, and sew up the loose ends, and all the rest of it.

Filled with authority and importance, the expert on a certain morning, entered the factory. He had progressed through only one department when he came upon a spectacle which shocked his efficient being to its very core.

On a bench sat a languid-looking individual in overalls, busily engaged in sitting. Only the jaws of this person moved; he was masticating chewing-tobacco. Presently he bent forward and spat; then resumed his immobile pose.

With mounting indignation the expert watched him. Approaching with a springy tread, he fixed a sternly accusing eye upon the delinquent.

"See here, my man," he began snappily, "what do you think you are doing?"

"Me?" inquired the other. "I ain't doing nothin'."

"Well, what do you expect to do when you get through doing nothing?"

"Nothin'."

"Well, what have you been doing?"

"Nothin',"

"And how long have you been sitting here thus engaged?"

The loafer yawned.

"Oh, 'bout an hour—maybe an hour and a half."

"Is that so? How much do you draw a week?"

"Twenty-four dollars."

"Well," said the expert, "we'll stop that part of it right now. When is your week up?"

"Tomorrow."

"You needn't wait until tomorrow—you can go right now. Here!" The efficiency man reached into his pocket, hauled out his own private bank-roll, peeled off four fives and four ones and pressed the total into the hand of the overalled one, outstretched to receive the money. "Now get out of here and don't ever let me see you inside this plant again."

"Yes, sir," said the loafer. He arose, spat a farewell, and slouched out.

"I guess that's inaugurating a little rough and ready reform right at the jump," said the efficiency man to himself. He beckoned

to the foreman of the department and the latter approached.

"Who is that fellow walking out of the door?" asked the expert.

"I don't know his name," said the foreman. "He's got some kind of a job at the foundry across the street."

§ 145 A Seeker After Knowledge

It seems almost unnecessary to repeat what often before has been set forth in the introductions to some of the stories printed in this volume—namely, that age should be no bar to the telling of a good lively yarn. So far as I am concerned, it shall never be a bar.

That an anecdote should have stood the wear and tear of years is in itself proof of its excellence. If it lacked merit it would have died long ago.

For example, this offering has been going the rounds for a long time; and to my way of thinking is deserving of having a fresh start.

In Baltimore stood an impressive structure—a publishing house I think it was—which bore above its doors the legend "St. Paul's House" carved in large letters on a stone slab. Perhaps it still stands there; as to that I will not be sure.

One night, so the tale runs, a gentleman badly overtaken in liquor was making his way to his hotel. He moved slowly and with considerable difficulty. He was a visitor in the city and he was not exactly sure of his directions.

As he paused on the corner, uncertain as to whether he should turn right or left, his eye fell upon the inscription upon the façade of the building over the way. By the light of a handy street-lamp he spelled out the wording. Then, stimulated by a new purpose, he crossed the thoroughfare and ascending the steps, beat long and lustily upon the door panels. The hour was unseasonably late and for awhile there was no answer to his knocking.

Eventually, though, an upper window was raised and a woman—presumably the wife of the resident caretaker—put her head out of the opening.

"What's wanted?" she asked.

"Is thish St. Paul's House?" inquired the stranger thickly.

"It is."

"Then I sh'd like to ask him a ques'shun 'bout something whish been dishturbin' me for a long, long time.

"Ask who a question?"

"St. Paul, of course."

"But——"

"One moment, madam," he broke in: "the ques-shun is ver' shimple one.—I shimply wish to know whether he ever got any answer to that long letter he wrote to the Ephesians?"

§ 146 Straightening Out a Slight Error

Maurice Barrymore was famous, among other things, for his wit. At repartee he had no superiors and very few equals in or out of the profession. Once upon a time he scored on another well-known actor without speaking a word, and yet theatrical circles rocked with laughter for weeks afterwards.

Artistically speaking, this actor was not highly regarded by Barrymore. He belonged to the old school of ranting scenery-eaters for whom Barrymore had a profound contempt. Nevertheless his merits were valued by at least one individual—his manager.

The latter was putting on a classic play, with a really distinguished supporting company and with Barrymore's pet aversion, whom for convenience we will call James Walker, as the featured member. On the day when the bills went up for the forthcoming production Barrymore chanced to pass the Broadway theatre where the piece was to be played.

In the lobby entrance was hung a large poster, which, according to the usual form, read as follows:

MR. HENRY BLANK
Announces a
Revival of
"The Rivals,"
With the following notable
Cast:
Mr. John Doe.....Mr. Richard Roe
Miss Jane Coe.....Mrs. Mary Poe
Miss Olive Hoe.....Mrs. Jacob Stow
Miss This One.....Mr. That One
Mr. Dash.....Miss Space
AND
MR. JAMES WALKER

Barrymore read the announcement through. Then he walked to the corner, entered a hardware store, purchased an extra large carpenter's pencil and returning to the theatre he made a change in the wording.

He crossed out the "AND" and for it he substituted "BUT."

§ 147 Overlooking a Real Chance

When "Papa" Joffre, the idol of France, paid his memorable visit to this country a few years ago, two of his aides were Lieutenant de Tessan, a handsome young soldier with a record for gallantry, and Colonel Febry, whose breast also bore many decorations.

After the party reached Washington a reception was given for the staff. A lovely American girl who was filled with patriotic fervor approached Lieutenant Tessan as he stood in line.

"Tell me," she said, "did you kill any Germans during the war?"

"Yes," he answered; "one."

"And with which hand did you do it?" she asked.

"With my right hand."

Whereupon the young lady seized his right hand and repeatedly kissed it. Colonel Febry, who was standing close by, edged over to his countryman.

"You idiot!" he exclaimed, "why didn't you tell her you bit him to death?"

§ 148 The Expectant Young Lady

The young woman from the country who visited the dentist's office was evidently new at this sort of thing.

She eyed the equipment with widespread apprehensive eyes. It was with manifest reluctance that she seated herself in the chair and leaned her head back and, on invitation from the dentist, opened her mouth to reveal the tooth which, she said, had been misbehaving.

Her nervousness perceptibly increased as he jabbed with a sharp little steel instrument at the bad molar.

"I guess we can do something for it," he said, in a tone meant to be soothing. But the young woman was not to be soothed by mere words. Her rigid fingers gripped the arm rests of the chair until the knuckles showed white through the skin.

He filled an atomizer with an antiseptic fluid and treated the gum. As he withdrew the spray she clamped her mouth tightly.

"You may expectorate now," said the operator.

From between her clenched jaws she asked a question:

"Expect whut?"

§ 149 A Suitable Gait for Henry

He may not have been the slowest boy ever born. He may not even have been the slowest boy residing on this planet at

the present time. But he was slow; there was no denying that.

Because of his innate conservatism he lost several jobs. Finally his parents in desperation induced the proprietor of a bird and animal store to give him a place.

It took him two hours to give the canaries their seed, three hours to clean out a squirrel's cage and four hours to deliver a parrot to the house of a customer residing six blocks away.

"And what," he asked, after spending a whole afternoon in changing the goldfishes' water, "shall I do now, sir?"

The boss ran his fingers through his locks.

"Well, Henry," he replied, at length, "I think you might now take the tortoise out for a run."

§ 150 These Things Are Relative, You Know

A New Yorker was fishing in the upper peninsula of Michigan. His guide was a typical woodsman. One night by the camp fire he regaled the New Yorker with accounts of the severity of the winters in those parts—how deep the snowdrifts were and how biting the winds from off Lake Superior and how thick the ice was and how low the thermometer fell and how long the cold weather lasted.

"Well," said the Easterner, when the native had halted for breath, "we have some pretty bad cold snaps along the seaboard but nothing to equal what you describe. How do you manage to stand such conditions?"

"Me?" said the guide, "I don't try to stand it. Before it freezes up solid I pack up and git out of here and go down south fur the winter."

"To Florida, I suppose," hazarded the New Yorker.

"Nope," said the native, "Grand Rapids."

§ 151 The Recital of a Great Tragedy

George Ade always claimed that it happened to a friend of his. Personally, I believe he made it up. Be that as it may, it's a good story.

Ade's suppositious friend was traveling through Italy. He dined one night at a café in Naples. The behavior of two Italian gentlemen at an adjacent table interested him deeply. What they said made no difference to him, as he spoke no Italian, but the pantomime between them held his attention. I can well understand that. To

me, Italian has always seemed not so much a language as a calisthenic exercise. In other words, if the speaker's hands were tied and his shoulders were paralyzed, I'm sure he couldn't utter a sound.

After watching the nearby pair for some time, the Yankee beckoned to the head-waiter to draw nigh. The head-waiter was Swiss and knew half a dozen tongues, including English.

"You've been standing just behind the couple at the next table," said the American; "probably you overheard what it was that they've just been talking about."

"Oh, yes," said the waiter. "One of them said——"

"Hold on," broke in the American. "I don't want you to tell me yet. I want to see if my deductions are correct. Now here's the way I've figured out their conversation: One of them—the one with the beard and the educated eyebrows—is an inventor. I'm sure he's an inventor. And lately he perfected a new aëroplane—an improvement on all the older models. He described its design at some length. From his gestures I could make out that the propeller revolved much more rapidly than most propellers can revolve. The trial trip must have taken place very recently. Everything went well until the machine had ascended to a great height. Then something broke.

"Down, down, down came the ill-fated aircraft. It struck the earth with a tremendous crash. It was dashed to pieces. The aëronaut—evidently a friend of the inventor—was instantly killed. His body was horribly mangled. It was a terrible spectacle, a terrible tragedy. The poor man is still filled with distress and dismay; probably his nervous system will never be the same again. And never again will he have anything to do with aircraft—he is through forever. His table-mate, listening to the recital, has been almost overcome by emotion. He, too, is grief-stricken. Now then, tell me whether I'm right?"

"Not exactly," stated the waiter. "What happened between them was this: The tall gentleman has been explaining to his companion that for luncheon today he had two soft-boiled eggs—and one of them was bad!"

§ 152 Caught in Mortal Sin

Julian Mitchell, the famous musical comedy director, is as unlike the popular conception of a musical comedy director as it is possible for a man to be. The uninitiated generally picture a veritable Simon Legree cracking a figurative horsewhip all over the stage at re-

hearsals and using most violent language while cowed actors crouch and cower in the wings.

Now, Mr. Mitchell is rather a small man, very gentle in his movements and, no matter what the provocation may be, he invariably is polite. He is quite deaf and, like many deaf persons, has a very low speaking voice.

Once he was engaged to stage a specialty number for a George Cohan production. Mr. Cohan, as is well known, is of Irish descent and not in the least bit ashamed of it, and he wrote the piece, which had an Irish-American theme and an Irish name. So it very naturally followed that a considerable number of the young women of the chorus were of Irish antecedents, also.

Although they had professed to be experts in their line, Mitchell suffered grievously during the earlier stages of the drill work. Privately he confessed to a sympathetic bystander that rarely, in a professional career covering a great many years, had he seen in one collection so many individuals who couldn't keep step or march to time or execute even the commoner evolutions of a musical comedy chorus. Finally, late one afternoon at the conclusion of a particularly harassing all-day session, patience ceased to be a virtue.

Taking the center of the stage he called his pupils about him.

"Young ladies," he said softly, "my dear young ladies, I wish to put a question or so to you. Am I right in assuming that a good many of you are children of the noble Irish race?"

There was a loud assent.

"Ah, indeed—then I was right, wasn't I?" he went on. "In that case, I imagine that most of you are also of the Catholic faith. So I want every young lady here who is a Catholic—I mean a good Catholic, and who goes regularly to confession—to raise her right hand."

On all sides hands were extended. Counting slowly, Mitchell took the poll.

"That's very nice," he commented; "very nice and very gratifying. Now, I want to ask a special favor. I want each young lady who raised her hand to promise me that she will go to confession some time during this present week. And when you get in the confessional you be sure you say to the good father that you lied when you told Mr. Mitchell you could dance.

"That will be all, young ladies. Thank you so much!"

§ 153 Tracing Back to First Sources

The gentleman who entered the drugstore was plainly under the influence of something stronger than Florida water. Stepping with

the utmost care to avoid tripping over his own shadow, he ambled up to a notions counter and with difficulty, but politeness, raised his hat to the young woman in charge there.

"What is it?" she inquired pleasantly.

"That's the trouble," he stated somewhat thickly, "I can't remember. My wife told me to get it but I have been so busy all afternoon going from place to place, you know, and then back again to the first place, that I've forgotten. I got a clue though. It's something out of a drugstore."

"Well," she said smilingly, "you've made a beginning anyway. This happens to be a drugstore."

"Marvelous coincidence!" he exclaimed. "I have to go to a drugstore and here I am in a nice drugstore."

"Maybe I can help you. Was is something in drugs you wanted?"

"That's it—I remember now."

"The prescription department is two aisles over."

"Wait a minute," he demurred. "You look like a friend in need, to me—intelligent, too, if you'll pardon my shaying sho." He thought deeply. "Kindly name me some drugs?"

"What kind of drugs?"

"All kinds. Name me over all the drugs there are."

"Why, that would take all night," she said. "There are thousands of different drugs and different patent medicines."

"Tha's so," he agreed. "Then we'll have to try some other way, won't we? Lemme ponder." He pondered for a moment. "I'm beginning to get a notion. Do you know geography?"

"Well, I went to school."

"Then you must know the geography of our own fair land."

"Possibly so."

"That's fine. Then name me some lakes. You know, great big lakes."

"Let me see," reflected the puzzled young woman. "Well, there's Lake Champlain?"

"Got to be bigger than that."

"Well, then Superior?"

He shook his head.

"Huron?"

"Nope, but you're getting warm, Little Sister—getting warmer all the time. Keep going."

"Michigan?"

"No."

"Erie?"

He fairly gurgled in his joy.

"Stop!" he cried. "Now we're getting somewhere. Now tell me something important—something historical—that happened on Lake Erie long time ago?"

"Well, there was the Battle of Lake Erie."

"Hurrah, hurrah! Who was it won that battle?"

"Why Admiral Perry, of course. Perry's victory, you remember."

"'Course I remember—remember ever'thing now. All comes back to me like a flash. My congratulations, young lady, on your wonderful education! I'll now go across yonder and tell 'em to give me fifteen cents worth of perrygoric."

§ 154 All Head and No Body

Away back yonder before the Spanish War, when so-called yellow journalism began to flourish in the big cities, an enterprising person published a weekly in a small town upstate in New York. He caught the fever; he began to burn with a craving to emulate the sensational examples set by some of the metropolitan dailies. So he studied their spread-eagle headlines with a view to taking pattern from them.

He felt, however, that before introducing a thing so revolutionary in the columns and to the subscribers of his journal, he must have the proper excuse. Something worthy of being handled in the new way must happen. Soon his opportunity came. One evening, just as he was about to put his paper to press, word was brought in of a distressing fatality which had just occured.

Having secured the details, he set to work to frame his headline. It ran as follows:

BROKE HIS NECK BY FALLING OFF A MULE
Pete Slocum, Aged 44, Estimable Citizen, Met Instant Death at 4 P. M. Tuesday, When Favorite Steed Tripped and Threw Him Five Miles From Town
VICTIM LEFT A WIFE AND THREE SMALL CHILDREN
Parties Coming Along Later Found Body Lying in Road—Report That Deceased Had Been Drinking During the Day—No Funeral Arrangemnts Made Yet

So much for the headline. Beneath it, in body type, came the story. It was not long; indeed it was exceedingly short. It read as follows:

"We are informed that the above facts are correct."

§ 155 A Yankee's Brutal Revenge

Americans will never understand why the British pronounce certain words in the English language the way they do. On the other hand, Britishers will never understand why the Americans pronounce practically all words in the English language the way we do. No doubt the linguistic feud will go on forever.

Apropos of this I beg leave to offer the following:

During the visit last year of the American Bar Association to foreign parts a member from New York state was chatting one evening with a London barrister.

"I had a letter today from a friend of a friend of mine," said the Yankee. "He appears to be a very charming fellow—certainly he's most hospitable. Perhaps you may know him—he belongs to our profession and is fairly prominent in it here in the city, I believe. His name is Cholmondeley."

The Englishman gave an involuntary start of pain.

"My dear fellow," he entreated, "you'll pardon me, I'm sure, but the name is not 'Cholmondeley,' it's 'Chumley'."

"But it's spelt——"

"The spelling has nothing to do with it, old chap. It's the way it's sounded that counts."

"Oh, very well," said the American. "Well, anyway, this gentleman has very kindly volunteered to put himself and his car at my disposal tomorrow. We're going to motor down to Oxford. My great-grandfather was an Oxford graduate and I'm naturally quite anxious to see the place where he got his education before he emigrated over to our side. He attended Magdalen College there."

"Pardon me again, won't you," said his companion. "But I feel that I must put you right. The college to which you refer is invariably known as 'Maudlin'."

"Oh, is it? Well, I'll try to remember. Anyhow, after we've seen Oxford we're driving back for tea with one of your distinguished literary men whose work I have always admired immensely —St. John Irvine."

"One moment," murmured the Englishman. "Once more I must set you right. When one speaks of the Apostle one naturally says 'St. John.' But when one speaks of a person of the same name one of course says 'Sinjin.' So the writing chap you mention is, naturally, Sinjin Irvine. Simple, eh what?"

"I'll say it is," answered the New Yorker. He cast about to get

the conversation on safer grounds before he should make any more serious breaks:

"By the way, I believe you said you were coming over to see our country next fall? I hope you'll enjoy your visit?"

"Oh, I'm sure I shall," declared the Britisher. "It will be my first visit, you know. I'm especially interested in seeing your great scenic wonders and natural phenomena. Immediately upon my arrival I mean to post off to Niagara Falls."

"No, no, no," exclaimed the American, "not 'Niagara Falls'—'Niffs'!"

§ 156 To Thirst or Not to Thirst

On the subject of Prohibition enforcement or the lack of the same, there had been a brief but somewhat heated argument between the zealous woman reformer who favored the Eighteenth Amendment and the elderly Kentuckian who abhorred the idea of total abstinence whether compulsory or voluntary.

"But my dear Major," said the earnest lady, "consider the matter from the standpoint of longevity."

"Bah!" snorted her opponent. "I repeat it, madam—bah! What has temperance to do with longevity?"

"A great deal. Statistics prove that teetotalers live, on an average, twelve years longer than those who regularly use alcohol as a beverage."

Madam," said the Major, "why should I sell my birthright for a mess of dotage?"

§ 157 The Punctual One

This story was old—good and old—before Prohibition came in. As I used to hear it, years and years ago, two Southern gentlemen of ripened age sat one evening by the hospitable fireside of one of them when the shocking discovery was made that there wasn't a drop in the house to drink.

"Jim! Oh, you Jim!" called the host and in prompt response his black body-servant appeared in the living-room door.

"Jim," ordered his master. "I've just found out that the demijohn is empty and here Colonel Doolove and I are fairly perishing for a toddy. Throw a saddle on the fastest horse in the stable and grab a jug and light out for town as fast as you can go and bring a supply of liquor back. If you hurry, you ought to be back in just

forty minutes. But don't lose any time—I don't believe we can wait a single minute longer than that!"

"Boss," proclaimed Jim, "I'se gone!"

"The roads are powerful muddy, Major," said the guest, as Jim vanished. "I'm afraid your man won't be able to make the round trip on schedule time."

"Don't you worry, Colonel," said the Major, comfortingly. "That boy of mine is the most punctual nigger there is in the whole state of Tennessee." He glanced at his watch. "He's just about galloping out of the stable now."

He sat down, his timepiece still in his hand. Colonel Doolove, drooling slightly at the mouth, produced his own watch and, mentally, the pair proceeded to follow the black messenger on his errand.

"He's passing through the swamp," said the Major, after a five minutes' wait.

"Yes," agreed the Colonel, "and now he's going past Donovan's blacksmith shop."

"He's just rattled across Champey's bridge."

"The Methodist burying ground is just ahead of him!"

"The burying ground is behind him!"

"Fifteen minutes! He's on the outskirts of town."

"Sixteen minutes! He's flying down Main Street!"

"Seventeen minutes! He's hitched and he's running into Jake Dudley's saloon."

"Eighteen minutes. Jake is filling up the jug."

"Jake is driving the cork in."

"Jim has grabbed the jug and is running out to where his horse is hitched. Major, I make it stronger—that's the most punctual nigger south of Mason and Dixon's line!"

"Twenty-one minutes and a half. He's coming up Main Street, hell-bent for election!"

"He's passing the outskirts."

"He's whizzing past the grave-yard!"

"He's crossed the bridge over the creek—right on the dot!"

"Thirty-seven minutes!" clarioned the Colonel after a little. "He's left the blacksmith shop behind him. He's gone by the crossroads like a shot. He's splattering through the low grounds leading down to the swamp. Major, get the sugar and the ice and the spring water ready. Your boy is on the last lap. He's topping the last hill."

"Thirty-nine minutes!" shouted the Major. "He must be galloping up the lane from the big road. Colonel, in just one minute from now that boy will be standing in that doorway yonder—or I miss my guess."

Scarcely breathing, the pair stood in silence, hearkening with all their ears. In the hallway without there were sounds of hurrying feet.

"Colonel," whooped the Major, "didn't I tell you I had the most punctual nigger in the whole United States working for me? Forty minutes, to an even second, and here he is!"

The door was thrust open. The two white gentlemen, fairly frothing with anticipation, leaped to their feet.

"Majah," said Jim, "fur de las' half hour ur mo' I been lookin' high an' low fur de saddle fur dat hoss of your'n an' seems lak I can't find it nowheres."

§ 158 An Economist in Black

A stylishly attired negro woman applied to a lady for a position. She was a fair cook, she said, and she wanted ninety dollars a month, because her husband had a good job and she didn't have to work, so when she did work it was for very high wages. She added that her husband made forty dollars a week as an electrician. The lady suggested that with so much money in the family they ought to save a good deal.

Whereupon the dressy black person whooped with mirth.

"No, ma'am!" she cried out. "We don't waste none of our money savin' it!"

§ 159 Saving Up for the Big Event

Malcolm McLeod, is, as might be gathered from his name, a Scot. As he told the yarn to another man who in turn passed it along to me, there once lived in the town of Scotstown, Quebec, where Mr. McLeod was born, a citizen named Colin Campbell MacNabb, whose personality made him more than locally famous.

This Mr. MacNabb, while not exactly what the most kindly critic would call a finished, all-round athlete, nevertheless always entered as a contestant for each and every event at the annual Caledonian games, on the remote chance that he might capture one or two prizes of more value than the combined entrance fees, which totaled up to one dollar. He manfully tossed the caber and ran in the distance races in the hope of coming out twenty-five cents ahead of his day's expenses; but in the mile race it was apparent to his most fervent admirers that he was not half trying. In fact, there were only eight runners and Colin Campbell MacNabb finished eighth.

"Mon," one of his friends asked, "'why do ye no run faster?"

"Run faster?" he rejoined, "an' me resair'rving myself for the bagpipe competition!"

§ 160 A Message from the Other Shore

It was at a spiritualistic séance. The medium specialized in summoning the spirits of great personages back from the Other Shore, and the result was a varied entertainment, highly satisfactory to the assembled true believers. Mary Queen of Scots rapped on a table and made a chair waltz on two legs, and Marc Anthony strummed a guitar, and King Solomon addressed the reverent gathering briefly, speaking with a pronounced South Brooklyn accent.

At this juncture the medium's husband made a special announcement. If any person present wished to communicate with the shade of some illustrious one who had not already taken part in the evening's program, Madame would endeavor to materalize the individual desired.

An English woman who was a devout churchwoman, spoke up. She would like to behold and speak with Cardinal Newman, or, at least, she hoped to have a message from him, personally delivered.

Madame agreed to try. She went off into a trance, uttering muffled moaning sounds. Presently the black draperies of the cabinet were agitated and then, in the pale, bluish light which focused upon the cabinet and left the rest of the room in darkness, appeared a dim figure swathed in white.

In the midst of a hushed silence this shape took one step forward, raised two fingers of the right hand in the gesture of the apostolic blessing and in impressively deep tones uttered the following:

"Benedictine!"

§ 161 Something for the Lost Cause

Down at Washington they used to tell this story on Colonel Bill Sterritt, deceased, that veteran philosopher of Texas, who figured in so many of the late Alfred Henry Lewis's "Wolfville" tales. It may not have been true but certainly it suited the personality of the Colonel.

Sterritt was a Kentuckian by birth and came of a family that believed strongly in Secession. An older brother of his, the famous Jeff Sterritt, was one ofMorgan's Raiders. So it was natural that

when Bill came up to Washington a few years after the Civil War ended, to represent several struggling Kentucky and Tennessee papers as their special correspondent, he came with a full cargo of Southern sentiment.

Those were lean times for the South and not one of the papers he served could afford to pay him more than a few dollars a week. He wasn't even able to rent desk-room. His office was under his hat and he wrote his despatches in hotel reading-rooms. But he was modest and agreeable and his point of view, then as later, was breezy, and he made many friends.

One of the friends he made was a distinguished ex-brigadier of the Union army who covered the news of the National Capital for the Middle-West paper of which he was part owner. This gentleman was dignified, gallant and kindly; he had high principles and beautiful manners. But he had a temper, too, as was befitting a brave soldier. He took a great fancy to the threadbare, witty stripling from Kentucky. In fact, he constituted himself Sterritt's patron. One day he went to him and said:

"See here, my son, I'm tired of seeing you skirmishing about with no moorings. Now, I have a big office with plenty of room in it. I'm going to fit up one end of it for your use. There'll be a desk there for you and a chair and a place to hang up your hat. Here's a key to the outside door—from now on I want you to make yourself at home there and see your friends there."

Bill accepted the offer. From that time until he became more prosperous he shared the quarters of his elderly friend. One morning as he sat in his private corner, a slinky individual of a type somewhat common in Washington in the two decades immediately following the War, entered the office. This person was of dubious repute. He was supposed to be a lobbyist but common rumor had it that he was not above doing a little blackmail once in a while. Also, he was by way of being a professional waver of the Bloody Shirt. He sidled up to where the old war-horse sat at his desk in the middle of the room. The general gave him a curt nod. In nowise abashed, the visitor bent his head and whispered something in the brigadier's ear.

The response was prompt but startling. Without a moment's hesitation he hauled off and clouted the newcomer on the nose.

"Why, you infamous blackguard;" he sputtered. "How dare you —how dare you have the effrontery to try to enlist me in one of your despicable schemes!"

With that he leaped to his feet, seized the stunned intruder by the

back of the neck and began kicking him about the room while Sterritt, with a look of lively interest on his face, sat by enjoying the spectacle.

"I kick you, sir," cried out the old gentleman, "because you are an infernal rascal. (*Bang!*) I kick you because you are a traducer of womankind. (*Blooie!*) I kick you because you are unworthy of being called a man. (*Kerwop!*) I kick you because you presume to approach me and seek my aid in your nefarious operations. (*Blam!*) I kick you because, sir—because——"

He hesitated here, still holding the writhing culprit in his firm grip. His toe hung poised; his knee was bent; it was evident that he had at least one more sound wallop in reserve and ached to bestow it. But, seemingly, he had run out of reasons.

With an expectant smile on his face young Sterritt rose up.

"I beg your pardon for interrupting, General," he said gently, "but I wonder whether you'd mind if I kicked the dam' scoundrel once in memory of our Heroic Confederate Dead?"

§ 162 A Little Tale for Business Men

Just before he died, at an untimely age and to the regret of the amusement-loving public, Barney Barnard, the great Hebrew comedian, told me this one:

He said a co-religionist of his was on the road selling goods for a general supply house. One afternoon he dropped in on a customer residing in a suburban town.

"I don't want anything in your line today," said the storekeeper, as the traveling-man began undoing a sample case. "I'm all stocked up."

"Oh, give me a little order anyway," pleaded the drummer. "Just a little something to prove to the boss that I'm on the job. Business has been rotten the last few days."

"Same here," said the customer. "No, there's nothing doing. You'll only be wasting your time and mine. Besides, I haven't got any money to spare."

"You won't have to pay for ninety days," said the drummer.

"That makes no difference. I'm feeling poor and I don't want to feel any poorer. Why, only yesterday I ordered a Pomeranian for a hundred dollars and Lord knows where I'm going to get the cash for it when it comes through. But my wife just would have a Pomeranian. You know how women are."

"Sucker that you are!" exclaimed the traveling-man. "To pay

one hundred dollars for one of these here now Pomeranians is foolishness. Listen to me: You just send a wire canceling that order and I'll bill you an A-number-one, high-grade Pomeranian for—let me see?—for sixty-five dollars delivered."

"That's a trade," said the citizen and the deal was closed.

The traveling-man hurried back to his hotel and on the long-distance telephone called up his chief.

"Say, listen, Mr. Einstein," he said to the head of the firm, when connection had been made, "this is Levinski speaking. I just got an order from Jones out here in Southville; not much of an order, but still something. I sold him a Pomeranian for sixty-five dollars. . . . Say, Mr. Einstein, what is a Pomeranian?"

§ 163 Just Pure Tact

It seems that a very distinguished motion-picture producer—a man who is looked upon as one of the real leaders of the industry—went to call on one of his actors, who was critically ill. In fact, it was because he was told that his former employee was dying that the producer visited the out-of-the-way tenement on the East Side where the actor was about gasping his last breath.

The great producer spent several minutes at the bedside of the dying man trying to cheer him up with the promise of a leading part in hs next picture.

"Why, you'll be yourself in no time," he went on. "I'll have you out in California and I'll make a real star out of you yet."

The actor smiled a weak smile of protest. He did not have the strength to utter a syllable against the extravagant promises of his former employer.

The caller took his departure. Starting down the narrow stairs he bumped his head against the ceiling.

"Ouch!" he exclaimed. Then in a perfectly audible voice he added: "I wonder how in thunder they expect to get a coffin down these steps?"

§ 164 A Tribute to Her Majesty

An American was visiting England. He was alone in London one night. Perhaps it was his state of loneliness which caused him to imbibe rather copiously of liquid refreshment as he dined in solitary state at his hotel.

The meal, which was mainly liquid, being finished, he wandered aimlessly forth into the night bound for the Savage Club of which he was a non-resident member. But in his confused state he failed to take the right turn and continuing on his way on down the Strand and into Pall Mall, he presently wandered into a very conservative club where a very conservative group of gentlemen were having a dinner.

He was in full evening dress and, despite his state, bore himself with all possible dignity. The functionary at the door of the banquet hall admitted him without question and, identifying him as an American, decided that he must be a visiting foreigner of importance and escorted him to a vacant seat at the table reserved for guests of honor. Being installed in this place of prominence, the American slumped himself down in his chair and fell into a pleasant slumber just after the company had responded to the toast:—"Gentlemen, the King." There he slept quite peacefully and comfortably through the feast and through the speech-making.

The dinner was nearing its close when the chairman, who had been studying the countenance of the slumbering one and wondering who the distinguished stranger might be, had an inspiration. He announced that the company would now be favored with a message from the distinguished gentleman from overseas who sat near him and who doubtless brought a message from Britian's English-speaking cousins on the other side of the Atlantic. With a wave of his hand he indicated the lone American. There was a restrained sound of polite applause and a pause. The American slept calmly on.

The stage-wait threatened to become awkward. The Yankee's neighbor on the right sought to relieve the suspense. He nudged the American in the ribs and the latter opened his drowsy eyes and said:

"Whish?"

"They are waiting for you to speak," whispered his neighbor. "The chairman has just called upon you. Please give us a word or a toast."

Slowly the American lifted himself to his feet. By an effort he focussed his wobbling and uncertain gaze upon the rows of expectant faces before him. He remembered the last words he had heard before he drifted off—the toast to the king. With the memory inspiration came to him. If the head of the royal family had been thus gracefully honored why should its next most conspicuous member be slighted?

He lifted his glass.

"Gen'l'men," he said, "the Queel!"

§ 165 Making the Job Difficult

In Missouri there used to be a judge who had one abiding fear. He was desperately afraid of lightning. The first suggestion of a gathering thunderstorm changed him from a dignified and competent citizen into a quivering refugee. One jagged bolt from the clouds, one rolling reverberation, and he would flee into hiding.

On a certain summer evening he was entertaining guests at dinner. Suddenly the skies became overcast and there was a rumble of distant thunder. The host laid down his knife and fork and shoved his chair back from the table. There came a flash of lightning and a louder crash. The judge was on his way.

He tore out of the dining-room, dashed through the hall, plunged headlong into a coat-closet under a flight of stairs and buried his head in the folds of a raincoat.

His mortified wife excused herself from the company and trailed him to his hiding-place. She rapped upon the door of the closet.

"Who is it?' sounded a quavering muffled voice, "and what do you want?"

"Judge Robinson," said the humiliated lady, "I'm ashamed of you—you, a Christian and a grown man and a judge on the bench behaving like this! Don't you know if the good Lord wants to kill you with a bolt of lightning he can find you, no matter where you hide?"

"That may be, madam," he answered, "but, by gum, I'll put Him to as much trouble as possible!"

§ 166 Brave, But Also Reasonable

Frank Smith, who formerly pitched for Cincinnati in the National League, was reared at Tarboro, North Carolina, and began playing baseball there. He became the baseball idol of his fellow Tarborians, and when George Leidy, later manager of the San Antonio team in the Texas League, went to the town to lure the young phenomenon into faster company, the whole community showed their resentment very decidedly, because, with their pitcher gone, the home team would go to pieces.

"I was in my room at the hotel," said Leidy, telling about it, "when a dozen husky, determined-looking citizens walked in on me and began making threats. They told me that Frank Smith was going to stay right where he was and that if I wanted to go on living I'd

better catch the train leaving for the North at 7:30 o'clock that night."

"What did you say to that?" asked a listener.

"I told them," said Leidy, "to go to thunder. I told them that I was a free-born American citizen and that I would stay there a year if I wanted to. I told them in so many words that they couldn't bluff me. I told them that I would die in my tracks before I would show the white feather—and I was down at the depot at a quarter of seven, waiting."

§ 167 Spoken from the Heart Out

Probably most of the readers of this book are familiar with the story of the negro who worked as an extra at one of the Hollywood studios and who, in the filming of a scene purporting to show an African jungle, was called upon to enter a camouflaged cage containing a performing lion. The prospect did not appeal to the candidate. He demurred at it.

"What's the matter with you?" said the assistant director. "That lion's not going to hurt you. That lion was brought up on milk."

"So wuz I brung up on milk," said the unhappy darky, "but I eats meat once in awhile now."

Of somewhat more recent vintage is a tale that I heard only the other day. The man who told it to me said it really happened.

At one of the big plants they were making a movie dealing with Scriptural times. One scene showed the court of a savage potenate. For the rôle of the monarch a huge coal-black Afro-American was selected. He made his entrance, scantily garbed in barbaric trappings. For added realism, it was decreed that over his shoulders should be draped a live leopard. Just before the animal was brought out of her cage her trainer gave her a shot of morphine to keep her docile and quiet. She was a lady-leopard.

A small negro, newly arrived in California from Texas, was detailed to accompany the giant on his triumphant entry and to fan him with a huge ostrich-plume fan. The costume of this supernumerary consisted of a breech-clout and an ankle-bracelet. He took himself and his rôle very seriously, which of course was exactly what the director desired. In advance he was warned that no matter what happened he must continue to fan the savage king until ordered to leave off. A slip on his part might ruin the whole film.

Midway of the scene the leopard suddenly woke up. Presumably, the dope was dying out in the spotted beast. She emitted a snarl and

began to wiggle off her perch upon the big black man's shoulder's. With one hand he grabbed her by the neck and held the spitting, squealing creature at arm's length.

There was an instantaneous scatteration. The director, the cameramen and the supporting members of the cast beat if for places of safety. Only the little darkey held his ground. Mindful of his instructions, he continued the fanning operation; but the fan trembled and quivered in his grip and his rolling eyes were focussed on the struggling leopard and out of the corner of his mouth, with all the fervor of which he was capable, he entreated the big negro over and over again in these words:

"Do not cast her aside! Tha's all I asts you—do not cast her aside!"

§ 168 A Chance for the Visiting Angel

When Wlliam Travers Jerome was District Attorney of New York he started a crusade of prosecutions against fortune tellers, soothsayers and fake mediums, who at that time infested parts of Manhattan Island in numbers. A county detective named Al Thomas, a husky person with a wit of his own, was detailed to the job of securing evidence against these offenders and then arresting them.

In pursuance of his object Thomas called upon a so-called crystal-gazer, pretending that he wanted a reading. The faker ushered the customer into a dimly lit room hung with black hangings and adorned with mysterious objects presumably pertaining to black art. There he sat Thomas down at a table and taking a seat on the opposite side he took Thomas's brawny left hand, palm upward, in one of his own hands, and in the other he balanced a large glass ball.

For a period of impressive silence he alternately shifted his gaze from the stranger's palm to the ball and back again from the ball to the palm. Then seemingly he began to drift into a trance. His eyes dropped, his head nodded, then at length his lips moved, framing words.

"A shape is hovering above me," he stated in rapt tones. "It draws nearer and yet nearer—it is an angel!"

"Fine and dandy," broke in the impious tones of Detective Thomas; "if said angel is a pal of yours you'd better fetch him along with you to put up the bail money. Because you're pinched!"

§ 169 Absolutely No Provocation

A distinguished actor of my acquaintance was playing an engagement in Chicago. One day he took a stroll along South Clark Street and came to a district of second-hand clothing shops. A thing he saw there sent him back post-haste to find three of his friends and take them with him to help him enjoy his discovery. I was one of the trio who accompanied him.

He halted us in front of a show-window filled with garments bearing seductively worded legends purporting to represent that these offerings had been cast back upon the makers' hands through no fault of their own but rather because of the captiousness of the original purchaser.

The words "Misfit," "Not Claimed," "Tailor's Sample," and so on, recurred time and again.

But in the central display, originality in the gentle art of advertising phraseology had scored a triumph. Behind the glass dangled a pair of trousers of a most startling cut and an even more startling pattern. The colors fairly leaped through the window to smite the passerby in the eye. To the garment was affixed a card bearing the statement:

"These Pants Were Uncalled For."

§ 170 Deceased Didn't Fit the Role

In the old days a skilled actor was supposed to be able to take almost any imaginable rôle. He studied the part and then, by make-up, voice intonation and stage business made over his own personality to fit the character. But in these degenerate times the managers insist that physically and temperamentally a candidate must be qualified for the job, else he or she will not do.

The other day a distinguished leading man with a keen sense of the ironic came into the Lambs Club.

"Curious thing happened up the street awhile ago," he said.

"What was that?" inquired one of the class who always bites.

"A man who was said to have been an actor dropped dead on the sidewalk in front of one of the booking-offices. They picked him up and carried him into Donovan's undertaking parlors—you know Donovan, the chap who handles nearly all the theatrical funerals—but Donovan took one look at him and declined to bury him."

"Why not?"

"Said he wasn't the type."

§ 171 The Needs of an Appetite

The large colored man who entered the office of the vaudeville manager bore himself as one conscious of his talents.

"What can I do for you?" inquired the showman.

"You kin gimme a job."

"Oh, you're a performer then?"

"I suttinly is."

"And what is your particular specialty?"

"Boss, I'se the champeen aig-eater of the world."

"As how?"

"Well, suh, at one time right befo' yore eyes I eats one dozen hen-aigs, one dozen duck-aigs an' one dozen turkey-aigs, all of 'em raw."

The white man was by way of being somewhat of a practical joker.

"Well, that does sound like novelty. I think I can use you on the bill at my theatre—if you can stand the strain."

"Strain is whut I stands the best."

"Listen here, then. On regular week-days we give four performances—two matinées, two night shows."

"Suits me fine, boss."

"And on Saturdays and Sundays we give six shows instead of four. How about that?"

"Meks no diffe'nce to me, suh. You furnishes de aigs an' de audiences an' I does de rest."

"But on holidays we run a continuous performance from ten in the morning until eleven in the evening."

He paused for a reply. The applicant wriggled uneasily.

"Too big a contract for you to tackle, eh?"

"Naw suh, I wuzn't worryin' 'bout that. But looky yere, boss on them thar holidays you'll have to gimme a lil' time off."

"What for?"

"So's I kin go home an' eat my reg'lar meals."

§ 172 A Dramatic Novelty

The late John Stetson, famous in the early days as a theatrical producer, was a unique character. His own generation knew him as a shrewd and canny individual who'd take a chance. He was self-educated, and in some respects the education had been neglected.

One day there called upon him at his office in Boston an aspiring

playwright who brought along the script of a melodrama he had done. The young man may have been gifted in other regards but so far as his speech was concerned he suffered a severe handicap—he stammered terribly. Being sensitive, he rarely mentioned his affliction. Indeed, he had no need to do so—as soon as he opened his mouth it advertised itself.

He came now by appointment to see the great manager. As he entered the room where Mr. Stetson sat, the latter barked at him:

"No need for introductions—I know who you are. You know who I am. You say you've got a play. All right. I'm a busy man. Set right down there and open it up and read it to me."

The young dramatist obeyed. He made heavy going of it but eventually he finished.

"I'll take your play and put it on," said Stetson. He pressed a button and his assistant entered.

"Fix up a contract for this young fellow," commanded the chief. "I'm going to take his play. It ain't much of a play in some ways but it's got one great novelty in it that ought to make an audience laugh their heads off—all the characters stutter."

§ 173 Lo, the Wise Indian!

Big Chief Meyers, who caught for the New York Giants, in the days when the battery of Matthewson and Meyers was famous, was —and still is—a remarkable man. Although a full-blooded Indian of one of the California mission tribes, he is a college graduate and, what is rather unusual in a professional ball-player, an exceedingly well-informed lover of art, and he has a keen wit. His tribal name was Tortes. One day a curious person asked him why he had taken the name of John Meyers.

"It sounds so Indian," said Meyers.

On another occasion a friend invited Meyers to tell him what his favorite pictures were.

"There are two that I particularly like," said the brawny Indian. "One is Abbey's mural painting, 'The Quest of the Holy Grail,' on the walls of the Boston Public Library. Whenever I'm in Boston I go to see it. And the other is that picture called 'Custer's Last Stand.'"

"Surely you don't mean that atrocious chromo showing a lot of white cavalrymen being killed and scalped—that thing which some brewing company out West used to give away as an advertisement?"

"That's the identical one," said Meyers.

"But why, in the name of goodness, should you favor that daub?"

"I'll tell you why," said Meyers. "It's the only picture done by a white man that I ever saw where my crowd is getting as good as an even break."

§ 174 The Opinion of an Expert

My father-in-law, who lives in Savannah, is fond of fishing. He has a friend residing in the nearby city of Charleston who, if such a thing be possible, is fonder even of fishing than my father-in-law is.

This Charleston gentleman hired a negro boatman to take him on an angling expedition. Before starting, the negro was quite sanguine of a satisfactory catch. He knew, he said, exactly the right place to anchor with the certainty of plenty of strikes.

Nevertheless, an hour or more passed during which the patron did not feel a single nibble. He changed baits, he shifted his position, he did everything an experienced angler should do, yet no bite rewarded him. He was a patient man, as all good fishermen must be, but there is a limit to patience.

"Look here, Bob," he said at length, "are you sure this is the place where you brought those other gentlemen yesterday when they made such a good catch?"

"Yassah, this yere is de identical spot."

"Are you certain we have the right sort of bait?"

"Yassuh, we got de very best bait dey iz."

"How about the tide, then?"

"De tide suits exactly, boss," said Bob.

"Well, you told me before we started that the weather was perfect for fishing to-day. If the weather is right and the tide and the bait; and if we've come to the right spot, what's the reason I'm not getting any results? I'm not kicking, you understand, I'm merely asking your professional opinion as an expert."

"Boss," said Bob, "de trouble is dat de fish ain't yere whut de water call fur?"

§ 175 The Beginning and the End

This is one of those stories that are laid in the future. The reader is to project his mind a few months ahead. The scene is supposed to be Boyle's Thirty Acres in Jersey City; the time a fine spring afternoon of 1926. Mr. Jack Kearns, who really should

have claimed the E. K. Bok Peace Prize of one hundred thousand dollars for figuring out a way to stop all fighting, has at last consented that his man, Dempsey, may meet Harry Wills, the black challenger, in a mill for the heavy-weight championship of the world.

In advance of the battle a group of Wills' friends have, as the saying goes, bet their shirts on the representative of their race. Every cent they could earn, beg or borrow has been wagered so that, when the morning of the great day comes, they awaken to a hideous realization. In their enthusiasm they have emptied their pockets and exhausted their credits and now, with a fortune at stake, they cannot see the fight for the reason that none of them has money with which to pay for his admission.

Like an angelic vision from Heaven comes a rescuer upon their horizon. In an unexpected quarter one of the group digs up enough cash to buy one bleacher ticket and a megaphone. By lot, then, a member is chosen. He will go into the arena and climb to a certain designated point behind the back row of bleacher seats overlooking the steep rear wall of the enclosure. His associates will be stationed outside immediately below him. Through his eyes they will witness the fight. Using the megaphone, he will tell them of the struggle, calling it off blow by blow until the finish comes. In their minds they have no doubt regarding that finish.

They have just enough pennies in reserve to pay their passages on the boat from the New York side of the river; the rest of the way, to the outskirts of Jersey City they go afoot. They don't mind walking though—they figure on riding back in triumph.

We are to imagine, then, the picture. Perched high up on the outer rim of Tex Rickard's great open-air drome is the official eye-witness. Clustered almost under him are his friends. The fateful hour is at hand. He starts his narrative:

"Dempsey enters de ring. (A murmur of expectancy from his listeners below.) He looks skeered an' nervous." (Cries of approval.)

He announces:

"Hon'able Harry Wills, noble gladiator of de cullid race, now enters de ring. (Tremendous cheering.) He 'pears to be in de pink of condition." (Voice from below: "Dat's my Harry!") (Another voice: "You means de brown of condition, don't you, Henery?") (A third voice: "Pink or brown, don't mek no diff'unce —he's de boy wich is gwine bring home de middlin' meat fur us 'uns!")

The announcer:

"De two men poses in de middle of de ring whilst de snapshooters teks dey pictures. De excitement is intense." (A fourth voice from below: "Let 'em go and git started—I'se all ready!") (A fifth voice: "Hot dam, dat's de talk!")

The announcer:

"De referee calls de two battlers together fur final instructions." (A pregnant hush in which the sound of subdued praying may be heard.) "De gong sounds fur Round One an' de fight of fights is on! Wills swings a wicked right. (Tremendous cheering.) Dempsey ducks! (Hisses.) Dempsey swings his left. Wills does not duck—*Good Lawd Almighty!*"

§ 176 He'd Rather Earn His

The setting of the picture is supposed to be at the portals of Paradise—stop me if you've heard this one!—and the principal actors are St. Peter, the keeper of the keys, and the shades of two mortals who just have knocked for admission to the Heavenly precincts.

One of the spirits is that of a Southern colored man lately deceased. Just behind him is a New York East-Sider, also just translated from earthly scenes.

In response to the saint's opening questions, each of the pair gives his name and his latest terrestial address. St. Peter consults the massy pages of the Judgment Book.

"That's right," he says, "it appears from the entries set forth here that both of you are qualified for eternal life among the elect. Also, there's a special blessing in store for you. Because of your good deeds in the flesh, it is permitted that in addition to entering the Celestial City, each of you may have your dearest wish gratified. He looks toward the expectant colored man: "My son, what wish would you desire most of all? Speak and it is yours."

The favored one knits his brows in thought.

"Please, suh, boss," he says at length, "ef 'taint too much trouble, I'd lak to have a million dollars."

The money-bags are materialized out of the sky and, uttering loud cries of thanksgiving, and staggering under his burden of bullion the candidate passes through the Golden Gates.

St. Peter turns to the East-Sider.

"And now, my son," he inquires, "what do you desire?"

The answer comes instantly:

"Twenty dollars worth of phony jewelry and a halluf an h ur alone with that nigger."

§ 177 So Say We All of Us

Whenever the time for paying quarterly installments of our income tax rolls around, a victim should be in a fit frame of mind to appreciate this little story which is enjoying a voyage among the veterans.

A colored private of a Southern state was homesick when he landed on French soil and the longer he stayed on it the more homesick he became. He hailed word of the Armistice with joy but to his chagrin nothing whatsoever was said about mustering him out and sending him back to his beloved America. On the contrary the supplies on the Brest docks continued to pile up higher and higher and he and the other members of his labor battalion had to work as hard as they'd worked while hostilities were on—or even harder.

"Say, look here," he complained to the brawny sergeant of his squad. "I'se gittin' plum wore out wid all dis yere liftin', an, onliftin'. Looks lak to me dey oughter be shippin' me back whar I come from. It's des de same ez de war an' I only 'listed fur de duration."

"Boy," commanded the taskmaster, "heah me an' heed me. An' de rest of you niggers mout ez well hear whut I'se sayin'. De war is done over but fur sich ez you de duration ain't hardly commenced yit."

§ 178 Fifty-Fifty on the Handclaps

In the old days before the invention of the air-brakes simplified the job of coupling up steam-cars, Opie Read, the Chicago novelist and lecturer, went to Peoria to make an address during a trainmen's convention.

On his return home he was telling a friend about it.

"It was one of the most remarkable experiences in my entire career on the platform," said Read. "The guests of honor were a lot of retired switchmen, who attended in a body. They seemed to like my wheezes immensely but there were so many one-armed men down front that they had to do their applauding in pairs."

§ 179 A Tale of Two Chaplains

In France five men of a field battery were killed by an aëroplane bomb which a German airman dropped. The regimental chaplain, a Presbyterian, conducted the funeral of the victims. Among the five was a lad who, for convenience's sake, we may call O'Malley.

He came from a little New England town. When his mother learned that a clergyman of a faith other than her own had buried her boy she wrote to the colonel of his regiment and asked that a Catholic service likewise be read over his grave. The colonel turned the letter over to a priest serving as spiritual director of another command, and the good father immediately went in search of his Presbyterian brother and asked him the whereabouts of the lad's resting place.

The Presbyterian led the other clergyman to a grove of trees near a small stream and pointing out a certain mound said: "This is the one."

As the priest took out his little book and stepped to the head of the grave, the Presbyterian chaplain said:

"What are you going to do, that I didn't do? I read a service for this boy and I said a prayer for him."

The Catholic chaplain came to attention.

"O'Malley," he commanded, "as you were—before my friend here tried to make a Protestant out of you!"

§ 180 Seeking the Real Victim

The late Pete Dailey, one of the stars of the old Weber and Fields show, was famous on and off the stage for his ready wit. During one of his Chicago engagements he made the acquaintance of a resident of that city whom we shall denominate by the name of Smith. He could not very well help making the acquaintance of the gentleman.

For this Smith was a person who made a specialty of ramming his way, with or without an invitation, but generally without, into places where theatrical people were assembled. He was not lacking in intelligence—but his chief social drawback was that immediately on joining any group he proceeded to take entire charge of the conversation and, drowning out all competition by virtue of his superior merits, to talk on and on in a loud, strong voice for so long as he had a listener left.

Among persons who liked to slip a word of their own in once in awhile, this habit militated against his popularity. You may have known such persons. Well, you have never met one who was the equal of this contender. In his field he was the world's champion. Eventually he became known—and shunned—among all the show folk.

Dailey, strolling on Broadway one day, met a friend from Chicago.

He began asking about his acquaintances in the City by the Lake.

"By the way," he said, "how's Smith?"

"Smith has a busted ear-drum," said the Chicagoan.

"Whose?" asked Dailey.

§ 181 A Touch of Family Pride

Chauncey Olcott, the actor, tells a story of two Irishmen who attended the Olympian games on an afternoon when a slim young American athlete broke the world's pole-vaulting record.

As the applause following this achievement died away one of the Irishmen remarked:

"Well, he done well, that young fella, and I'm proud of him. But I seen a man once't that could lep a foot higher than he did—yis sir, maybe a foot and a half higher."

"What talk have you?" demanded his companion, whose name, according to Olcott, was Casey. "Don't you know that no wan in the world iver lepped so high as that lad yonder jist lepped? Don't you know that he's bruk all the known records? Don't you know that it may be years and years before anywan else leps as high ag'in?"

"I'm tellin' ye," repeated his friend stubbornly, "that I'm not wrong. Didn't I, meself, know the lad that would do the likes of this and better, any day?"

"You knew him?" blared Casey incredulously, "You knew him, you say? Well, who was he?"

"'Twas your own brother, Danny, in the auld counthry," stated his companion, softly.

"Oh, you mane me brother, Danny?" said Mr. Casey, in an altered tone, "Well, Danny would!"

§ 182 Tribute Where Tribute Was Due

Years ago in one of the smaller cities along the Eastern seaboard, the local leader of the dominant political party was one Mr. Michael Dempsey. Mr. Dempsey carried the organization in the hollow, as the saying goes, of his hand. True, there was a selfish motive behind his activities, because he held the most lucrative local office within the gift of the populace.

As might be inferred from his name, he was of Celtic antecedents. Naturally, what with his powers of leadership and his compelling

personality, he was the idol of all the Irishmen among his constituents. Those among them who had come, as he had, a penniless greenhorn from the Old Country, regarded him as the greatest man in the state, if not in the nation.

In the fullness of time, and largely through his patriotic efforts, a bond issue was voted for the erection of a new county building. On the day after the cornerstone of the new structure had been laid, two of his followers chanced to pass the spot. Upon the face of the stone, in the customary Latin numerals, the year had been engraved, as follows:

MDCCCXCIX

One of the passers-by stared at this curious inscription. He spelled out the letters. To him they had no meaning.

"Larry," he said wonderingly to his companion, "what's the purpose of that?"

"Simple enough," said his learned friend; "that MD stands for Mike Dempsey, and thim three C's in a row means Clerk of the County Court. 'Tis merely a deserved tribute to Mike that's been carved here."

"Yis," said the first speaker, thoroughly convinced, "but whut does the rest of thim marks stand for?"

"Oh, thim?" said the scholar, "That's just to keep track of the times whin he's licked the damn Republicans."

§ 183 Culture Among the Cops

Either the secretary of the Los Angeles Civil Service Commission is a practical joker of the first order or the members of the Los Angeles Police Department are a lot of unconscious humorists. Let the reader decide!

An examination was held in the Fillum City for patrolmen who desired to qualify for future vacancies among the sergeants. Naturally, the candidates for promotion were numerous.

Afterwards the secretary of the commission, in going over the papers, compiled certain questions, with the answers to those questions, and made copies of them and distributed them among his friends. On his word of honor he swore that he had changed no single word and that, if anybody doubted his word, he had the original papers on file in his office to prove it.

Be that as it may, here is the collection:

Question: What would you do in case of a race riot?
Answer: Get the number of both cars.

Question: What is sabotage?
Answer: Breaking the laws of the Sabbath.

Question: Name an act that would constitute reckless driving.
Answer: Driving without due regard to the Presbyterians on the street.

Question: What is arson?
Answer: Mistreating a woman.

Question: What first-aid treatment would you give to a person having an epileptic fit?
Answer: Take him to a doctor and have the bite treated.

Question: What are rabies and what would you do for them?
Answer: Rabies are Jew priests and I would be very glad to do anything I could for them.

Question: To what extent may an officer use force in effecting an arrest?
Answer: Use good common sense, and if not capable, summon help.

§ 184 Not Up to the Requirements

It seems there was a little girl who was an inmate of an orphan asylum. The superintendent there decided that her mentality was defective. She lagged behind other children of her age in her studies. So she was turned over to the State Home for the Feeble-Minded. On her arrival at the latter institution the little stranger was placed under expert observation for a period and then submitted to an official examination. As a result, the head physician decided that she was merely subnormal and accordingly she shortly was returned to where she had come from. The day afterward, two of the other inmates of the institution were discussing her.

"Did you hear what happened to Janie?" said one of them.

"No—what?" asked the second.

"You know she was sent away to be an idiot, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, she couldn't pass and had to come back."

§ 185 An Appropriate Quotation

In New Rochelle, that thriving suburb of New York, formerly lived an individual who combined the practice of a somewhat unpo-

etic calling with a romantic temperament. His business was that of a garbage collector and a cleaner-out of sewers. But even in the midst of his professional labors he was much given to larding his conversation with quotations from the poets. Rarely did an occasion arise when the operator was at a loss for a classic reference.

Augustus Thomas, the playwright, lives in New Rochelle. A situation arose when he required the expert services of this fellow-townsman of his. The main kitchen drain of the Thomas home was stopped up.

The official cleaner arrived equipped with the tools of his trade. He removed the cover of the outlet and then for a moment he paused. The job was of such magnitude as temporarily to abash even so experienced a hand. Slowly, almost reluctantly, he rolled up his sleeves, meanwhile dubiously eyeing the prospect which confronted him.

He looked aloft at Thomas, standing above him, and shook his head. Then, as he took a deep breath of resolution, he said:

"Well, Mr. Thomas, I suppose I might as well go ahead. After all, 'Faint heart ne'er won fair lady.'"

And with these words he dived in.

§ 186 The Unnecessary Touch

"Egbert," said one of the Hallroom Boys to the other, "I want to ask you a very personal question: If I take a girl out for the evening and show her a good time at the movies and on the way home buy her an ice-cream soda, do you think I should kiss her when I tell her good-bye?"

Egbert gave the proposition intensive study.

"No, Clarence," he said, at length, "don't you kiss her. You've done quite enough for her!"

§ 187 A Little Story for Husbands to Read

Jones, who had been married a considerable number of years, took counsel with one of his bachelor friends.

"It seems to me," he said, "that my demestic affairs are slipping into a rut. I'm afraid my wife is getting bored. There doesn't seem to be any of the romance left that we had in our early married life. I wish I knew what is the matter."

"I can make a guess," said his confidant. "Do you still pay your

wife those little attentions that you used to pay her when you were courting her?"

"Well," confessed Jones, "I can't say that I do."

"I thought as much," said the wise counselor. "The trouble with you is that you're like that other married man who've said under similar conditions that when you'd run to catch a car you didn't need to run any more after you'd caught it. Now, this is my advice to you: Turn over a new leaf. Start this very day. Begin paying your wife a little attention. Fuss over her just as you used to do when you were first engaged. Try to be a sweetheart to her instead of just a husband."

"By gum, maybe you're right," said Jones. "I'll do that very thing."

That evening, when he burst in the front door his arms laden with parcels, he planted a warm kiss upon the cheek of the astonished Mrs. Jones and in tones of a well worked-up enthusiasm he cried out:

"Dearie, this is going to be a big night for us! Here's a ten-pound box of candy for you and here's a dozen American beauty roses. Now I want you to slip into your best frock. I've got a table reserved at the Ritz-Carlton for dinner and I've ordered two seats for the opera. Why—what's the matter?" he added, seeing that her lips trembled.

"Well, to begin with," she said, "the cook quit today. Your Aunt Clara arrived unexpectedly for a visit and there's no telling how long she'll stay, both the children were sent from school, sick with bad colds and now—" she burst into tears—"and now, to cap the climax you come home drunk!"

§ 188 The Lesser of Two Evils

A colored girl was entertaining a gentleman friend when another suitor for her favor appeared at the locked front door and demanded admittance. There was jealousy in his manner and anger in his voice. Also, there was a justifiable suspicion on the part of the occupants of the house that he might be toting a razor. Anyhow the newcomer had a reputation for behaving violently at times. His rival within doors was of a more pacific turn of mind.

"Gal," he said to his hostess, "I ain't aimin' to have no rookus wid dat tough nigger outside yonder."

"You ain't skeered of him, is you?" demanded the lady.

"I ain't skeered—I'se jest careful, that's all. I reckon de best

thing fur me to do is jest to climb out of one of dese here back windows an' go on 'bout my bizness."

"You better not do dat," said the girl. "Dey's a dawg in de back yard."

"Honey," quoth the departing one as he skinned over the window sill, "de way things is out in front it don't make no diff'unce to me ef de back yard is upholstered in dawgs."

§ 189 A Small Tale About a Large Nose

A New York playwright, famous for a gift of sardonic humor, was invited one evening to join an after-theatre party at one of the Broadway cafés.

The prospective host told him he would be expected to pay some attention to a lady friend of his—the host's—fiancée.

The dramatist was wary. He remembered that more than once he had been called in at the eleventh hour to fill this rôle.

"Tell me something about this girl," he said. "Is she good-looking or is she one of those total losses?"

"Well," admitted his friend, "she isn't exactly what I'd call a raving beauty, but she's awfully nice—good company and all that sort of thing, you know."

"Yes, I know," said the playwright mournfully. "Well, for your sake I'll take a chance."

When he reached the appointed rendezvous at midnight, his worst fears were justified. Sitting at a table with his friend and his friend's sweetheart, was an exceedingly dumb-looking young woman. Her most outstanding feature—and in this connection the word "feature" advisedly is used—was an enormous hook nose. To the dismayed eyes of the new arrival it loomed as the largest nose he had ever seen affixed to a human countenance. So, before joining the party he fortified himself copiously from the contents of his pocket flask.

Presently, somewhat groggy but bearing himself with all proper dignity, he approached the group and introductions took place. With some slight difficulty he seated himself. His fascinated gaze meanwhile fixed upon the nose of his appointed vis-a-vis.

An embarrassing little pause followed. Nobody seemed to have anything to say. It was the befuddled dramatist who broke the silence. Bending forward and addressing the stranger, he said politely:

"I beg your pardon, but do you smell anything dead around here?"

"Why, no," she said.

"Well, then," he continued, with an air of finality, "there can't be anything dead around here."

§ 190 A Disturbing Element

The terrible tempered Mr. Pepper came home from business in an especially irritated frame of mind. The supper did not suit him; news of what had gone on in the household, as detailed by his patient wife, served only to put an added edge upon his grouch.

Through long experience, Mrs. Pepper knew the signs. In an effort to avert a storm, or at least in the hope of not being present when it burst, she hurried the children off to bed and then set out for a call upon one of the neighbors, leaving Mr. Pepper in his favorite chair—if he had any favorite chair—with the library lamp placed where the light would fall just over his left shoulder and with the evening paper across his lap.

But Mr. Pepper declined to be soothed. A student of psychology would have said he registered disappointment. Everything was so peaceful and calm. There was no one within earshot with whom he might find fault.

As listlessly he took up the newspaper, a very small kitten came silently in through the half-open door. As it crept across the floor toward him, Mr. Pepper, with the manner of one driven beyond control, flung the sheet from him and in a voice of thunder roared at the offending creature:

"What the devil do you mean, by stamping in here like that!"

§ 191 A Game of Give and Take

At the height of the popularity of the Farmers' Grange, a countryman in my neck of the woods joined the movement. There was an impressive initiation ceremony with hailing signs and a ritual and all the rest of it. The green hand entered with enthusiasm into the solemnities of the occasion and at spare moments during the following week back home he strengthened his memory in the secret work.

The next Monday found him in town. He had made the journey for the express purpose of attending a session of the Grange. Dressed in his best, he made his way up the stairs to the second floor of the leading office building, which nearly all the local fraternal orders used in turn, and rapped three times upon a locked door.

Fifteen minutes later, down on the main street, the new member,

looking very much downcast, encountered one of the officers of the lodge.

"Say, whut's the reason you fellers wouldn't let me in tonight?" he demanded.

"Wouldn't let you in where?" countered his brother.

"Into the Grange. I tried to work my way past the Grand Outer Guardian but it wasn't no use."

The other gave a start of surprise.

"Say," he exclaimed, "just what are you driving at?"

"Well, it was like this," said the novice: "I climbed the steps and I knocked on the door. And at that a kind of slot slipped back and somebody inside stuck his eye to the peep-hole and says kind of short, 'What is it?' So I made the grand hailing sign and I says to him: 'I plow, I sow, I reap,' just like that. And he says: 'The hell you do!' and slammed the hole shut."

"Why, you idiot!" proclaimed the older Grangeite, "don't you know that we don't meet until tomorrow night?"

"Well, then, who does meet up there tonight?"

"The Masons, that's who. And you went and give those fellows our pass-words."

"Gosh almighty!" cried the penitent blunderer. For a moment the enormity of his mistake stunned him. Then he brightened.

"Say listen," he added, "it might be worse."

"How could it be worse?"

"Well, I may a'given them our pass-word but, by gum, I got their countersign!"

§ 192 Of a Forgiving Nature

"Mr. Ferguson," said the colored saw-mill helper to his employer, "I'd lak to git tomorrow off, please suh."

"Well now, look here, Jim," said the boss, "we're kinder short-handed just at present. I let you go not more than six or seven weeks ago, as near as I recall."

"Yas suh, you did," admitted Jim, "but dat wuz so I could go to my wife's fun'el."

"Yes, I remember now. Well, what do you want to get off tomorrow for?"

"So's I kin git married ag'in."

"Married? Why, good Lord, Jim, how comes you're figuring on getting married again, when your first wife has been in her grave less than two months?"

"Well, suh," confessed the widower, "I never wuz de one to hold a grudge long."

§ 193 Dying in the Last Ditch

Bert Swor, who, to my way of thinking, is the best delineator of Southern negro types that we have, claims this was an actual experience of his. To me it sounds almost too good to be true and yet I think it must have been true. There is a ring of verity about it.

Early one morning Swor landed in Memphis, after an all-night ride from New Orleans. He had not rested well on the train; he had had no breakfast yet and decidedly he was in a grumpy mood. As he entered the door of his favorite hotel a black person named George fell upon him and, with cries of well-simulated pleasure, wrested his handbag from his grasp.

Now, this George was by way of being a character. You will find his type in nearly every Southern town and in some Northern towns as well. His specialty was service to the guests. He remembered their names and their peculiarities and in the manner of an old friend hailed and welcomed them on arrival. Thereafter, during the transient's stay, George, by small personal offices, so endeared himself that his financial rewards were much larger than those of the average bellhop. Indeed, it was his boast that he never yet had failed to win a handsome tip from the most frugal of travelers.

Knowing of George's unbroken record and being in a fit frame of mind for stratagems, Swor decided to prove the exception to the invariable rule. In other words, he would go through the form of resisting George's most affectionate blandishments with a view to studying the results.

So, when George darted at him and seized on his luggage with a glad outburst of recognition—"Why, ef it 'tain't Mista Bertie Swor! How you do, Mista Bertie?" Swor maintained a dour demeanor.

Brushing another bell-boy out of the way, George preceded him to the clerk's desk.

"Please, suh, gimme de key to Mista Swor's reg'lar room, Mista Clerk," he called out. "I knows jest whut he wants widout him sayin' a word. Come on Mista Bertie—jest follow me. Git out of de way, you other niggers! Ain't nobody goin' wait on Mista Swor endurin' his stay yere 'ceptin' 'tis George. Yere's de elevator, Mista Bertie, step right in!"

Arriving at the room George fussed about mightily. He unfastened the handbag, he hung up Swor's overcoat, he raised the window-shade to admit the winter sunlight and lowered it again to shut it

out. He directed the attention of his prospective benefactor to the fact that the bathroom was abundantly supplied with towels and that a fresh cake of soap had been provided. He volunteered to get an extra blanket for the bed.

Apparently oblivious of these attentions, Swor busied himself with changing his linen.

"Is there anything else, suh, Mista Bertie?" asked George, with just the proper emphasis in the words.

"Nothing else," said Swor, "except that you can get out. I'm tired and want to be alone."

"Yas suh. Mebbe you mout want to write some letters later on? Better lemme bring you a fresh pen?"

"No, I don't want any pen. What I want is solitude."

"Yas suh. S'posen'—s'posen' I sends up one of de dinin'-room hands to tak your order for a li'l morsel of breakfus'."

"I don't want any breakfast yet and when I do I'll come downstairs after it."

"Yas suh, prob'ly dat would be de bes'."

"Then suppose you get out."

"Jest goin', suh, jes' goin'!"

But George didn't go. His roving eye swept the room. It was plainly to be seen that his professional honor was involved. He just naturally could not bear to depart until he had extorted a coin from this obdurate white man.

But the prospect seemed so very hopeless! Reluctantly, he dragged his feet across the carpet. With his hand on the doorknob he halted for one final effort:

"Is you right suttin, Mista Bertie, dat they ain't nothin' mo' w'ich I kin fetch you—de mornin' paper or somethin'? Ain't they no clothes to be sent out an' pressed? Nor nothin'?"

"Not a blessed thing," said Swor. *"Good-bye!"*

But George still had a last charge in his locker. He passed out, closed the door slowly behind him, then opened it again and poked his head in through the opening. There was renewed light in his eye.

"Mista Bertie," he said, "ef you should tek a notion to trim yore own hair I could bring you up a nice new pair of scissors."

§ 194 A Natural Question

An Eastern lady with a ball-bearing jaw arrived at a so-called "dude-ranch" in Montana, accompanied by her husband, to spend the

summer. For others it may have seemed a reasonably short summer but to the residents of the immediate vicinity it was a century long.

For the lady proved to be one of the most efficient pests these gentle cowhands and hotel-keepers ever had seen. She worried the cowboys. She sat on the veranda and talked everybody else into a state of coma. She spread gossip, meddled in the management of the place, criticized the cooking until the cook quit, and three times a day made life miserable for the dining-room help. When she departed in September a holiday was declared.

In the following summer her husband reappeared alone.

"Where's your wife?" inquired the proprietor.

"She's dead," said the widower.

"Who shot her?"

§ 195 A Job That Was Finished

Most of us are familiar with the little story of the inexperienced motorist who swerved suddenly and knocked a pedestrian galley-west and then, all at once remembering his duty, cried, as he brought his machine to a halt:

"Look out!"

"Oh, my Lord!" groaned the victim as he scrambled to his feet, "You ain't comin' back, are you?"

I can match this with an episode out of real life—a case where the owner of a car really did come back.

In a town with which I am reasonably familiar, a lady was learning to drive a car. In fact, the lady thought she already knew, which explains why, after having taken a couple of lessons from a more experienced chauffeur, she ventured forth unaccompanied upon the public highway.

As she wobbled, in an uncertain course along a quiet street, a milkman driving a well-behaved nag turned a corner. The lady tried simultaneously to do several things—apply the brakes, avoid a collision, turn out, turn in, speed up, slow down—I don't know what all.

The reader has already guessed the answer. She banged squarely into the side of the milk-wagon, leaving it lying on its side in the gutter, with the horse and driver entangled in the wreckage, and then, losing her head and at the same time losing control of the mechanism, she darted away and swerved out of sight and circled the block.

Three minutes later, she reappeared on the scene of the accident,

still wrestling with her steering wheel. The dairyman, who had extricated himself from the mess, was cutting his struggling horse loose from the twisted harness when he heard a rattle of wheels. He looked up to see the same car and the same woman again bearing down upon him. Just in time to save himself he jumped.

There was a second crash and once more the green motorist proceeded on her devastating way. But now the capsized wagon was a total loss.

The main victim must have been a philosopher. For as he stood in the midst of the ruins he scratched his head and remarked to a citizen who had hurried up.

"Well sir, I can't say I think much of that lady's drivin'. But I will say this for her—by gum, she's thorough!"

§ 196 A Testimonial to a Stranger

The wake for the late Mr. Grogan was in progress. The bier stood in the middle of the living-room of the Grogan home so that the friends might file past it easily. The bereft widow and her daughter sat in a corner. There was something to drink.

One by one the mourners approached the coffin and gazed down at the remains. So doing, the visitor would uplift a sorrowful voice in tribute to the virtues of the deceased. Mrs. Grogan was attentively listening.

"He was faithful in his religious duties," said one.

"He was kind and gentle to dumb animals," quoth another.

"A kind word for one and all," stated a third.

"Always wid a swate look upon his face."

"Niver known to grumble or utter a harsh word."

"He kipt his timper no matter what happened."

And so on and so forth. Finally it was Mr. Haggerty's turn:

"And what a family man!" proclaimed this gentleman. "What a man for the bosom of a family! The soul of domestic devotion. All that a husband should be! Spending all he made on his wife and childer. Sober and depindable——"

With a startled look on her face, Mrs. Grogan interrupted him.

"Honoria!" she cried, addressing her daughter, "I wonder can it be it's your father we're buryin'?"

§ 197 Speaking of Epitaphs

Simeon Ford, the famous New York wag, used to be nationally known as an after-dinner speaker. But a specialist recommended

that he have most of his teeth drawn. To Mr. Ford the teeth had been giving satisfaction for a long, long time and they were reasonably sound, but the physician figured that they were responsible for certain ailments, and the patient hearkened to him and went to the dentist. Then a difficulty ensued. Mr. Ford tried bridges and plates and crowns and pivots, but none of these devices proved comfortable. Either he didn't fit his artificial teeth or they didn't fit him. So he practically gave up eating solids, and large banquets knew him no longer.

But a few months ago he consented to attend a function given in honor of a close friend, and sat at the head table with the other notable guests. Toward the shank of the evening the toastmaster called upon Mr. Ford for a few words.

The lanky Simeon got slowly upon his feet.

"Some of you know why I have given up speaking," he said. "I don't talk in public any more. But I have not altogether wasted the time I have lately spent in a state of semi-retirement from the gay life of this great city. I have been composing a suitable epitaph for my own use. When I pass on I desire that these words may be inscribed upon my tombstone:

"Here lies Simeon Ford.
"Came into the world on such and such a date.
"Bit the dust on such and such a date.
"It was the first decent bite he'd had in years."

§ 198 The Cup That Cheers, Etc.

A Kentuckian went to Colorado to attend a convention. In the town where the convention was being held he bumped into a native of his home county, now living in the West. It was the first meeting between the two for a good many years.

"Well, Jim," said the delegate, after the first greetings, "how are you getting along?"

The question seemed superfluous, for Jim was shabby, down-at-the-heels, out-at-the-elbows, and generally of a woebegone aspect. Still, he asked it. Jim gave a hollow laugh.

"I reckon nobody ever had such sorry luck as I've had," he confessed. "My wife's been a confirmed invalid for years, I put every cent I had in a new business and she busted up on me and left me

still wrestling with her steering wheel. The dairyman, who had extricated himself from the mess, was cutting his struggling horse loose from the twisted harness when he heard a rattle of wheels. He looked up to see the same car and the same woman again bearing down upon him. Just in time to save himself he jumped.

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fly you start it up the ladder on the right hand side coaxing it along gently until it comes to the first bird-cage, which is hooked up with the other three bird-cages so that there is a continuous passage through all four. The fly, being an intelligent creature, strolls leisurely down the line, coming finally to the ladder on the left-hand side. Now, Mister, this is where my invention gets classy. The fly starts down, under the impression that he has escaped. He gets as far as the eighth rung from the bottom and stops to congratulate himself. Now watch. Come away from that draught. When he gets to the seventh, why it ain't there and the fly falls through and breaks his neck on the marble slab. Let's get out of here. Here comes a capitalist I don't like."

§ 200 Correcting the Oversight

The famous English actor, Sir Herbert Tree, who died a few years ago, had a gorgeous sense of humor. This was curious, for Tree was an enormous egotist and, as a rule, egotists are not humorous.

On one occasion an emotional Italian tenor had just concluded an engagement at the Lyric Theatre in London. Following his final concert the Signor gave a sort of farewell party to the friends he had made while in England. The affair began at the theatre and culminated at a fashionable café. Tree, who had become very fond of the temperamental and sentimental little Italian, was among those present.

He tried to escape, though, when the host insisted on kissing everyone good-bye. But luck was against him. After the singer had saluted his manager, his accompanist, the members of his supporting company, and everyone else in sight, he insisted that Tree should accompany him in the carriage to his hotel. The hour was now 3 A. M. and what from excitement, affection and wine, the Italian was in a highly exhilarated state. As he reached the sidewalk he disentangled himself from Tree's supporting grasp, threw both arms about Tree's neck and implanted a moist and resounding buss about Tree's lips, then fell into a waiting taxicab and in broken English bade the driver take him to the Garrick Theatre.

The perplexed cabby turned to Tree.

"Wot's the blinkin' idea in tykin' this cove to the theatre at this time of the mornin', guv'nor?" he asked.

"At any rate," said Tree, "I would suggest that you take him there. I'm not quite sure, but I rather imagine he has just remembered that he forgot to kiss the night-watchman."

§ 201 For Husbands Exclusively

This little story is meant for husbands, only. Wives, especially wives with pronounced social ambitions, are requested not to read it.

Two citizens met on the street. They hadn't seen each other for months. One of them was married to a lady who figured frequently in the columns of fashionable intelligence in the newspapers. After they had exchanged views on things in general the other asked:

"By the way, is your wife entertaining this winter?"

"Not very," was the sad reply.

§ 202 Who the Stranger Really Was

The ambitious citizens of a certain English city were giving a pageant commemorative of the ancient history of the community—the Roman invasion, life among the Saxons, the coming of the Normans, the habits and customs of the early Britons, all of it. Pains were taken to insure proper costuming of the characters typical of each succeeding period, and the people of the countryside were impressed as supernumeraries, the principal parts being taken by hired performers.

But the weather marred the success of the affair. It was raw and cold and rainy. Late in the afternoon two lady visitors came upon a shivering, bare-legged individual clad in a short tunic, with a skimpy purple cloak swinging from his shoulders, a sword girded about his middle, sandals on his feet and a helmet upon his despondent head.

"Oh," cried out one of them, "you must be Appius Claudias!"

"No mum," said the stranger. "I'm un'appy as 'ell!"

§ 203 A Chance for Profit

A precocious person of six had been left in charge of his adoring grandmother who, like most grandmothers, was most generously inclined toward this grandchild of hers.

"Granny," said Horace, "let's play acting games."

"All right; what shall we play?"

"We'll act out a Bible story," said Horace, evidently remembering something he had heard at Sunday school.

"Very well, what Bible story shall it be?"

Horace considered for a moment.

"I tell you," he said; "see my baby sister's crib yonder? We'll pretend like it's a manger. I'll get in the manger and be the Infant Saviour and then you can be one of the Wise Men of the East and bring me a whole lot of gifts."

§ 204 Putting the Scoffer in His Place

A pompous New Yorker, who in youth neglected his education in order to lay the foundations of the large fortune which now he enjoys—after a fashion—waited until he was well advanced toward middle age before he found time to take his first trip abroad. Upon his arrival back home he was greeted by a group of his fellow-members at a downtown club.

Quite naturally the returned traveler fell to talking about his Continental experiences. Someone, hoping to draw him out—not that he particularly needed drawing out—asked him what one thing in Europe impressed him most deeply.

The self-made man inflated his chest proudly:

"My auditorium with the Pope," he stated.

A bystander snickered.

"That's right, laugh," snorted the tourist indignantly, "you derned A. P. A.!"

§ 205 Saving Trouble for the Undertaker

During the Big War an alert-looking young colored man newly arrived out of the South, answered a call for unskilled workers at a munitions plant in New Jersey.

Replying to questions from the functionary in charge of the outer office he gave his name, his age, his place of birth and offered due proof that for good and sufficient reasons he had been exempted by the provisions of the draft.

"So far, so good," said the examiner. "Now then, in case of fatal accident where do you want the remains sent?"

"Whar do I want de w'ich sent, boss?" inquired the applicant.

"The remains—they would have to be shipped somewhere, you know."

The candidate made answer as he edged toward the door.

"Ef you don't mind, mister," he said, "I'll just take 'em along wid me now."

And he did.

§ 206 Managerial Wisdom

Without any desire to take part in the controversy over the respective intellectual merits of the theatrical managers and the Key West sponge-fishers, I herewith submit, for what it may be worth, an incident which happened in the office of a prominent producing manager, whose name is a household word in every actor's home. To him there came an experienced playwright bearing the script of a new piece which he had just finished.

"I don't want you to read it to me, now," said the manager. "Just tell me what it's like."

"Well," said the playwright, "it's a historical drama in five acts. I call it 'The Dauphin.'"

"For why do you call it that?"

"Because its based on the story of the Lost Dauphin."

"I don't want it," said the manager emphatically. "It wouldn't go. The public wouldn't never stand for a play about a fish."

§ 207 Blaming at Long Distance

Out in California on a prune ranch lives a former resident of Brooklyn who is a confirmed baseball fan—one of those not uncommon persons who know the averages of every big league player for the past twenty years and who can tell you offhand the date when old Cy Young pitched his last no-hit game and how many put-outs Cap Anson had in 1904. But this particular type of the species has one favorite above all other favorites—Frank Frisch, the phenomenally swift and dexterous second baseman of the New York Giants.

As the story runs, when the World's series of 1924 took place, a little group of baseball lovers in the prune country, led, naturally, by the ex-Brooklynite, clubbed in and raised a fund to lease a special wire, hire an operator, and, at a rented hall, receive the reports of the games, play by play.

On a front seat on the opening afternoon sat, all expectantly, the worshipper of the Fordham Flash. It was the Giants' turn in the first inning.

"Frisch coming to bat," chanted the telegrapher as his instrument clicked off the words.

"That's my Frankie!" shouted the loyal rooter. "Atta boy! You fellers wait for Frankie to come through. He's the guy that'll slam 'em out of the lot."

"Ball one!" called the announcer.

"That's the eye!" proclaimed the old Brooklyn resident. "They can't fool Frankie. He's the one that'll wait. He'll make that pitcher stick 'em over—then *blooie!*"

"Strike one!"

"Sure, Frankie would let one go by."

"Ball two!"

"Wot'd I tell you fellers? Frankie's in there wi' the old eagle eye woikin'!"

"Ball three!"

"Atta boy, Frankie, make 'em be good!"

"Strike two!"

"That's all right. It only takes one for Frankie."

"Strike three—and out!"

With a howl of rage the Frisch rooter leaped to his feet:

"Why, that big boiglar of an umpire!" he yelled. "That one was three feet wide of the plate if it was an inch!"

§ 208 The Colored Trade Would Be Light

It has been remarked before that, as a rule, the colored man does not take readily to the science of aviation. The common viewpoint of a majority of the race is summed up by the statement made by a colored soldier in the Great War who was detailed to a labor job in the air-service, and who, in reply to a question from a friend asking him whether he expected to do any actual flying himself replied:

"I don't care how high dey takes me in de air so long as I keeps one foot on de ground."

In a somewhat different way, the same point of view was expressed by the negro porter of a hotel down in Louisiana. A white gentleman was telling him of the strides that have been made in the new science of air navigation. He listened with every evidence of a lively interest.

"Gabe," said the white man, "over in Europe and up North they are now running aëroplanes that carry anywhere from ten to thirty passengers apiece on a single trip between the principal cities. It's only a question of time until they'll be doing the same thing down here in the South. What have you got to say to that?"

"Well, boss," said Gabe, "all I got to say is dat it won't be necessary to hitch on no Jim Crow cars."

§ 209 What the Defendant Craved

A darkey was up for pleading down South to a serious crime. Having been indicted, he was arraigned before the court and the case against him was called. It was then developed that he had no counsel.

"Why have you engaged no attorney to defend you?" inquired the judge on the bench.

"Jedge," said the defendant, "I ain't got no money to be wastin' on lawyers. Dey tell me lawyers is kind of costive."

"Well," inquired His Honor, "what do you propose to do then about the trial of your case? The prosecuting attorney tells me he's ready to go ahead and impanel a jury and present the evidence."

"Jedge," answered the negro, "so fur ez I is concerned, you can jest let the matter drop right here."

But the court explained that this would hardly do. He glanced about the room and his eye fell upon two striplings, newly admitted to the practice and the youngest and least experienced members of the bar.

"I shall appoint Mr. Jones and Mr. Smith," he said, indicating the juveniles, "to represent you."

The prisoner eyed his attorneys doubtfully.

"Jedge," he said, "I'd lak to mek you a proposition, please suh."

"State the proposition."

"I'd like to trade you off one of dese yere lawyers fur a good witness."

§ 210 Spoken from the Soul

This of course helps to prove that the British have absolutely no sense of humor.

It is told that an Englishman was paying his first visit to these shores. While in New York he stopped at a fairly expensive hotel.

On the day of his departure he went down to the office for his bill. He checked off the items and then paid the total. He then left the cashier's wicket and walked around to the desk where the manager sat enthroned.

"Pardon me," said the tourist, "but am I right in assuming that you welcome suggestions from patrons?"

"We do," said the manager. "Our constant aim is to increase the efficiency of our service."

"Quite so," said the Englishman; "then I have something to suggest. I have noticed that in your guest rooms, conspicuously posted where one in leaving will see it, is a small framed placard bearing a sign as follows: 'Have You Left Anything?' I would say that this wording should be altered so that it will read: 'Have You Anything Left?'"

§ 211 Scorn for a Slacker

The scene is an English public house, or by the terms of a phraseology no longer used in our fair land, a saloon. The earlier closing law, first put into effect as a war measure and now urged as a permanent step, is the topic under discussion.

Most of those present are opposed to any further entailment of their liberties. But a sound counter-argument is offered by a red-faced, hoarse-voiced gentleman who puts his emptied beer glass down, sucks the ends of his mustache—being a tidy person—and remarks:

"Well, wot I sez in this: If a bloke ain't drunk by 'alf past ten, he ain't tryin'!"

§ 212 Sons of the Revolution

He is what, for lack of a better name, is sometimes called a young-man-about-town. On the morning after he is clinging for support to a lamp-post.

An individual connected with the street-cleaning department walks up to a hydrant, dragging a length of hose behind him, and, fitting a wrench to the cap, proceeds to unscrew it.

"Don't—please don't!" cries out the youth anchored to the lamp-post.

"Don't do what?" asks the functionary, halting in astonishment.

"Don't wind up this street any tighter. She's spinnin' 'round too fash as it is!"

§ 213 Why They Called It a Bug-House

The chief physician came up to an inmate in a private insane asylum, slapped him on the back, and said in comforting accents.

"Well, old man, you're all right. I've just pronounced you cured of all the delusions which afflicted you. You can run along now and

write word to your people that you'll be back home in two weeks as good as new."

The patient departed gaily to write his letter. He had finished it and sealed it, but as he was licking the stamp it slipped through his fingers to the floor, and fell on the back of a cockroach that was passing, and stuck there. The patient hadn't seen the cockroach—what he did see was his escaped postage stamp zig-zagging over the floor to the baseboard, and following a crooked track up the wall and along the ceiling overhead. In depressed silence he tore up the letter he had just written and dropped the pieces to the floor.

"Two weeks, Hell!" he said. "I won't ever get out of this place. I'm worse off than I was when they brought me here."

§ 214 The Whereabouts of the Nut

The young minister had just taken charge of his first parish and was naturally very anxious to attend to his unaccustomed duties with efficiency and tact. Among his new parishioners was an elderly man who while not exactly crazy was a little bit touched in the head. A few weeks after the advent of the new clergyman this eccentric man died. The minister, bent on offering consolation to the widow and with the hope that he might handle the situation with sympathy and finesse, called at her house. The bereaved lady led him into the parlor where her husband's body lay. After looking for an instant at the mortal remains of the departed one, the clergyman turned to the wife:

"This is very hard, Mrs. Blank," he said. "I know how difficult it is for you and I sympathize with you deeply. But remember, dear Mrs. Blank, that this which we see here is but the husk—the outer shell, as it were. The nut has gone to Heaven."

§ 215 Time to Turn Over a New Leaf

After a period of business dealings together, a Broadway theatrical manager and an author decided to produce jointly. The papers had been drawn and signed, and the playwright moved into the offices of the new firm.

The manager settled back in his chair, took a long deep draw on his cigar and spoke to his associate:

"Listen, young fellow," he said. "Now you're my partner and for the sake of the business I should give you a little advice. For God's sake don't let anybody do to you what I've been doing to you for the last three years!"

§ 216 Poultry Quotations

This one is a favorite of mine—possibly because I have been hearing it for so many years.

Late at night a farmer was aroused by drowsy cacklings on the part of his hens. Arming himself, he slipped forth and, suddenly rapping on the door of the poultry-house he cried out:

"Who's in there?"

There was a pause and then a quavering Afro-American voice spoke:

" 'Tain't nobody in yere 'ceptin' jest us chickens."

§ 217 The Habit of a Financier

During the recent hard times—which some people insist are still present—Wall Street gentlemen were especially concerned. My own observation has been that, as a class, Wall Street gentlemen get frightened over money matters sooner than anybody else and stay frightened longer than anybody does, and are more excessively frightened while they are frightened, than the run of us are.

Be that as it may, there was a period when the average stockbroker tried to look confident and really was scared stiff. A member of the broking fraternity was walking through a quiet side-street one night, and even under the cover of the friendly darkness still endeavoring to counterfeit a fine air of prosperity and optimism, when two lusty footpads called upon him to stand and deliver, or words to that effect.

Instead of complying, the lone pedestrian flew at them. He fought like a tiger, with fists, feet and teeth. Both of them were sorely battered before they succeeded in hammering him into insensibility.

Then, seeking recompense for their wounds, they went through him. Tucked away at the bottom of a fob pocket they discovered a single, solitary dime—and not another cent to reward them.

The one who had found the coin looked in stricken admiration from the unconscious form of their victim to his pal and back again.

"Bill," he said in a reverent whisper, "if that guy had had as much as a quarter on him he'd a' killed us both."

At this instant the despoiled one stirred and opened his eyes and sat up.

"Boss," said the chief robber, "wot made you give us such a battle? That's wot we'd like to know—me and me friend here. If

this one little ten-cent piece means so much to you, why you can have it back, with our best wishes."

"It isn't the amount," explained the Wall Streeter, "I merely objected to exposing my real financial condition before strangers."

§ 218 Catching Step with Custom

In all the years that I knew the late "Germany" Schaefer I don't recall ever having heard his first name. It may have been Hermann. I know the initial was "H."

Schaefer, who died two or three years ago, was one of the most picturesque individuals in Big League baseball. After his legs had lost their youthful gimp he was a coach and fun-maker for the Washington team, and in this capacity shared national popularity with his associate comedian, Nick Altrock.

It will be recalled about the time we became active participants on the side of the Allies in the Great War, that individuals and articles bearing names suggestive of Teutonic origin lost popularity. On the restaurant menus German fried potatoes blossomed out as "Liberty potatoes" and sauerkraut became "Liberty cabbage." Schaefer saw the handwriting on the wall.

Shortly thereafter, his friends over the country received by mail neatly printed cards reading as follows:

"Mr. H. Schaefer, Baseballer, desires to announce that in future he will be known as "Liberty Schaefer."

§ 219 Just Naturally Boiling Over

As they tell the tale along Broadway, Mr. Jack Dempsey, accompanied by his impressario, Mr. Jack Kearns, was in a subway crush when a husky stranger trod with emphasis on the champion's toes and violently rammed a sharp elbow into the champion's short-ribs.

The intent was obvious. It plainly was not carelessness. The other person had chosen deliberately to be offensive.

As Mr. Dempsey winced with pain and rage, Mr. Kearns said:

"Jack, are you going to stand for that sort of stuff?"

"I am not," answered Mr. Dempsey, with fire in his voice.

He turned on his heel, overtook the departing offender, caught him by the coat lapel, swung him about and said to him:

"Say you: For two pins, three-fourths of the gate receipts, a guarantee of eight hundred thousand dollars, and seventy-five per cent of the moving-picture rights, I'd give you a wallop on the nose!"

§ 220 The Human Testimonial

A disheveled man, much the worse for wear and tear and things, staggered out of a blind tiger and laboriously propped himself against the door. For a while he owlishly surveyed the passers-by. Suddenly his foot slipped and he collapsed in a heap on the sidewalk and began snoring.

A hurrying pedestrian paused, reflectively surveyed the fallen man and then poked his head in the door.

"Oh, Frank," he called, "Frank! Come out here a minute."

The proprietor of the joint, smoking a fat cigar, emerged. He blinked in the bright sunlight.

"Hello, Jim," he said pleasantly. "What's up?"

Jim jerked his thumb toward the slumberer on the sidewalk.

"Yer sign has fell down," he explained, and resumed his walk.

§ 221 Last Words of a Great Child

The child—it was a male child and his age was seven—had been most carefully reared. His manners were perfect, his language ditto. He was the pride of a mother's heart, the envy of all mothers in the neighborhood, a model and a pattern for other youngsters of his age.

But Clarence—his name, appropriately, was Clarence—was in some respects like the rest of us. He was, after all, only human.

Once he slipped. Having slipped he sought, with lagging steps and drooping head, the presence of his mother. She could not see his face, for it was averted, but as he came near her she caught in his breath the odor of tobacco.

"Oh, Clarence!" she cried. "Naughty, naughty! You've been smoking. You'll be sick."

Politely but wanly he made reply:

"Thank you, Mother; I'm dying."

§ 222 Remembered by a Son-in-Law

There is a gentleman connected with one of the allied industries of the dramatic profession who has a pretty wit and a mother-in-law. His sense of humor generally is admired and doubtless there are many worthy persons who like his mother-in-law, too, but among them he is not included.

Whenever the old lady comes to town to see her daughter, the gentleman in question goes away from the flat and stays away from it until the visitor has departed. Such times, he lives at his club and communicates with his wife by telephone and—with regret must I tell it—finds solace for his solitude in a bootlegger's wares. In other words, he behaves as any average husband might behave under such conditions.

Late the other night he was wavering in the doorway of the club when a fellow-member hailed him.

"Hello, old man," said his friend; "going home?"

"Nope, I'm not going home just at present. I'm sleeping here."

"Well then, isn't it pretty near time you were getting to bed?"

"Yes," said the groggy one, "it is. But there's one thing I'd like to do before I turn in."

"What's that?"

"I'd like to go uptown and *kick* my mother-in-law good-night."

§ 223 A Candidate for the Vacancy

This one dates back to the days when we were going to war with Germany. I don't know where it has been wandering in the meantime because I heard it only the other day.

The draft board was in session in Lebanon, Tennessee. A large colored man came up as an unwilling candidate for registration. He claimed exemption.

"I jest natchelly can't go over yonder to fight them Germans, boss," he stated.

"Why can't you go—you look strong enough?" asked the chairman.

"Oh, I'se plenty strong. But ef you sends me away they won't be nobody to look after my wife."

Another colored man advanced with eager step from the group awaiting examination.

"Whut sort of a lookin' lady is yo' wife?" he inquired.

§ 224 Heavy Odds

As I have remarked before, one of the surest evidences of the excellence of a story is that the theatre, as speedily as may be, claims it for its own. If a yarn is very good it should be in refined vaudeville within two weeks after its first appearance, in musical comedy before the month is over, and inside of six months it ought to be

serving as a tag-line to bring down the first act curtain of a fashionable farce.

Here is one that became popular in various branches of the drama almost as soon as it was born. I understand it still is doing nightly service behind the footlights:

One professional crook meets another.

"I hear you had a streak of luck," says No. 1.

"What luck was that?" asks No. 2.

"They tell me you were in Wanamaker's store when all the lights went out."

"That's right, I was. All of a sudden the whole place was pitch black. You couldn't see your hand before your face."

"Lucky stiff! What did you get?"

"I didn't get anything. When the lights went out I happened to be in the piano department."

§ 225 A Dead Moral Cinch

A youth who had not made a glittering success as a newspaperman, used the telephone to explain to his over-lord of the city room why he had failed to secure admission to the presence of a certain wealthy gentleman just then in retirement as the result of considerable unwelcome notoriety.

"I located our man in his private office," he stated. "I knew there was a rear entrance. So I went around to the back door and rapped, and a fellow who looked as though he might be a watchman or a special detective opened the door about an inch and looked me over and then, just as he slammed the door shut, he said: 'I'll bet you're one of those dam' reporters.' "

"Go right back and take him up!" shouted the boss. "You've got a dead cinch to bust that guy."

§ 226 Where the Divorce Money Went

A Northern lady was spending the summer in Virginia. In the course of time she became very much attached to her colored cook.

One day the cook, whose name was Minerva, came in to make an announcement. She was going to be married to a dark person named George.

"But I thought you already were married," said her mistress.

"I is," explained Minerva, "but seems lak my present husband an'

me is both of us done lost our taste fur one 'nother. 'Sides which, he's done got hisself engaged to a yaller girl dat works down yere at de tobacco stemmery. So seein' ez him an' Gawge is good friends we wuz figgerin' on havin' a double weddin' dis comin' Tuesday night."

"Why, Minerva," exclaimed the distressed lady, "that will never do! You mustn't think of getting married again until you've been properly divorced from the husband you have now."

"Ain't none of us got no money to be wastin' on divorce papers," said Minerva. "If you hires a reg'lar lawyer it costs sixteen dollars."

"Well, rather than see you breaking the law and committing bigamy I'll give you the sixteen dollars," said her employer. Which she did.

On the following Wednesday morning Minerva marched into her mistress' presence with a proud and happy announcement to make:

"Well," she stated, "I'se a bride again. De double weddin' taken place last evenin' in de presence of a large crowd."

"But I had no idea you could secure a divorce so quickly in this state," said the white lady.

"Wellum," said Minerva, "we all got to talkin' it over 'mongst ourselves an' we decided it'd be a waste of money to go fussin' 'round de cote-house an' all lak dat. So we jest taken dem sixteen dollars you gimme and bought a hangin' lamp."

§ 227 A Bruised Spirit

"And why did you assault this man?" asked the judge on the bench, fixing his eyes sternly upon the prisoner at the bar.

"Because he went and called me a liar," said the defendant.

"Is that true?" inquired the judge, turning to the mussed-up victim.

"Sure it's true," said the accuser; "I called him a liar because he is one and I can prove it."

"What have you got to say to that?" asked the judge of the culprit.

"Ain't got nothing to do with the case, your Honor. Even if I am a liar I guess I've got a right to be sensitive about it, ain't I?"

§ 228 A Mortal Error Condoned

The late Father Ducey, a famous clergyman of New York, was a stalwart Democrat and the possessor of a keen wit. He was priest

at St. Leo's, one of the most widely known Catholic churches in the downtown section.

Charley Norcross in those days was a reporter for the *Tribune,* then, as now, a strait-laced mouthpiece of old-line Republicanism. One Saturday the city editor decided to get a symposium of the views of prominent clergymen of various denominations on some burning question or other. He sent his available staff forth to secure the interviews.

On Norcross' list appeared the names of Bishop Potter, Rabbi Wise, the Rev. Dr. MacArthur, and Father Ducey. It was late in the afternoon when Norcross, his assignment almost completed, reached St. Leo's in Seventeenth Street.

An assistant priest, in his robes, was standing in the portico of the church, taking a breath of air.

"Father," said Norcross, "I'm very anxious to see Father Ducey."

"Walk right on in," said the assistant. "Father Ducey is in the confessional but there's no one else there for the moment."

Norcross hesitated.

"But you see," he explained, "I'm not a communicant—I'm a newspaperman. I didn't come to confess; I came to ask him for his views on a certain matter for publication."

"No matter," said the clergyman. "Walk right on in—I'm sure he will be glad to hear what you have to say."

So Norcross, feeling decidedly embarrassed, walked on in. He came, with some trepidation, to the confessional box.

He entered and coughed nervously. From the other side of the partition a voice spoke—a voice kindly and inviting:

"Well, my son, what have you to tell me?"

"Fa-a-ther Ducey," sputtered the nervous Norcross, "—I'm—I'm a reporter for the *Tribune.*"

"Well," said Father Ducey, "I absolve you of that. Go on with your other sins."

But Norcross had fled.

§ 229 Marks of Distinction, in Fact

A charity worker was making a visit to a poor woman in a small country town. Four little children in the family wore glasses.

"What a pity!" exclaimed the visitor sympathetically to the mother. "It seems that all your children have trouble with their eyes."

"There ain't nothing the matter with their eyes, ma'am."

"Then why in the world do you make them wear glasses!" asked the charity worker.

The mother stared at her caller.

"Why, I like specs on young children," she said; "I think they're real dressy."

§ 230 An Explanation from Deity

It was one of the hottest days in the year in the town down South where certain friends of mine live. The thermometer, on the front porch, registered 106 in the shade at noon. Shortly after dinner, the three children of the household, Mildred, aged three; Jackie, aged five; and Anthony, who was seven, were reported missing. They were not to be found in the big yard nor about the stables.

Their mother grew uneasy. She instituted a search of the premises. Finally, when every corner and cranny had been visited without results, she bethought her that there was just one spot she had overlooked. This was the attic. It did not seem possible that any human being willingly would linger for a single moment in a place which must be incredibly hot. Nevertheless, the lady climbed the garret stairs. As she lifted the trap door a breath of terrific heat, like a blast from a furnace, struck her in the face. But what she saw made her forget her own discomfort.

In a corner, where a gable of the tin roof came close down to the floor, and under a sort of bower or grotto formed of blankets and coverlids taken from the store of winter bedding, sat the two younger children. Neither of them had on a stitch of clothing. Their small pink bodies glistened with perspiration. To and fro in front of their snug retreat paced the older boy, majestically. He also was nude, except that on his head he wore a huge coon-skin cap which he had resurrected from an ancient trunk.

"In the name of Heaven!"—exclaimed the astonished mother. "Children, what on earth are you doing in this stifling place: You'll be sunstruck."

Master Tony raised an authoritative hand to check her.

"Don't bother us, please, Mother," he bade her. "We're acting a piece out of the Bible." He pointed toward his brother and sister. "That's Adam and Eve yonder."

"Well, if that's Adam and Eve, who are you, pray?"

"Me?" He seemed surprised that she had not recognized him. "Why, I'm God Almighty walking in the Garden in the cool of the day."

§ 231 A Delusion and the Cure for It

One of the comic papers scored not long ago with this one: If memory serves one right it was in *Life* that it appeared. Anyhow, I want to give credit to the original source, whatever it was.

The man who is taking statistics for the new city directory approaches a movers' home in the suburb. At the doorway stands a stout, determined-looking lady.

"Madam," he says, "my call is official. I am compiling statistics on the inhabitants in this part of our city. Might I ask what your name is?"

"Duffy—Honoria Duffy."

"And your husband's name?"

"Naturally it's the same as me own—Duffy."

"I mean his full name."

"Well when he's full he thinks it's Jack Dempsey, but when I lay me hands on him it's still Duffy."

§ 232 In the Longevity Belt

A traveler passing through Northern Arkansas sees a gray-haired, long-bearded man sitting on a stile sobbing as though his heart will break. Filled with sudden sympathy, the stranger checks up.

"My friend," he inquires, "why do you weep so bitterly?"

"Pap whupped me—that's why," answers the sorrowing one as he wrings the tears out of his whiskers.

"Your Pap whipped you?" repeats the astonished traveler. "You say your Pap whipped you? Do you mean your own father?"

"Yep—because I th'owed rocks at Grandpap."

§ 233 Trailing an Old Resident

Some impious soul once ventured the opinion that the streets of Boston were laid out by a cow. Another suggestion was that originally the thoroughfares there followed reasonably straight lines but an earthquake came along and scrambled them. In other words, Boston streets are crooked.

Just how crooked they are may best be illustrated by a story that is told of a man who moved from Buffalo to Boston. On his first trip back to his former home he met a friend who said he had heard that Boston was a maze of twisting roads.

"I'll say it is," said the returned one. "Why, when I first went there I couldn't find my own way around at all."

"That must have been bothersome."

"Bothersome? I'll tell the world it was bothersome. Why, the second week after we got there my wife wanted me to get rid of an old cat that had been left behind in our house by the former tenants. So I put it in a sack and carried it clear over to the other side of town and turned it loose in a vacant lot."

"Well, I guess you lost your cat all right."

"Lost nothing. Say, listen, I'd never found my way back home again if I hadn't followed that cat."

§ 234 Correcting an Oversight

The local pastor of the Colored Methodist Church was entertaining at dinner the principal dignitaries of the annual Conference.

Most of the guests were large men, portly, dignified, wide-spreading men. Two of them were bishops and they were the largest of all. Wedged in between them where they sat at the table was a small and skinny presiding elder. His form was almost entirely hidden behind the hulks of his vast neighbors on the right and on the left.

The host did the honors of hospitality with a lavish hand. Certainly it was not his desire to overlook anyone. With a bountiful hand he served and passed the plates. A cheerful clatter of knives and forks arose, mingled with the smacking of sundry pairs of eloquent lips.

Presently the time came for replenishment.

"Bishop Walter," inquired the local pastor, "would you keer fur another bite of the chicken?"

Bishop Walter would. So, it proved, would Bishop James. All at once the host was aware of Presiding Elder Thompson, in almost total eclipse behind the chief guests.

"Ah, Elder," said the minister, in his best pulpit manner, "will you likewise have mo' of the chicken?"

"Mo'! Mo'!" shouted the indignant elder, "Huh! I ain't had 'some' yit."

§ 235 Advice to the Beleaguered One

Tom Lewis, the veteran actor, lives up to the inheritance of his Irish ancestry by being of a witty turn of tongue and mind. Also he loves nothing better than a good pugilistic mill.

While boxing bouts were still being held in the New York armories, two of us accompanied Mr. Lewis for an evening at one of the big brick barracks. The preliminaries were over. The main event of the night got under way—a ten-round go between middleweights. Now, this had been touted beforehand as a set-to where two evenly-matched and expert ringsters would show us all they had.

But alas, the trouble was that one of the fisticuffers had nothing to show. From the first moment, it was quite plain that not only was he outclassed but also that he had no stomach for punishment.

As his antagonist crowded upon him, slashing, jabbing and punching, he covered up, hiding his distressed face in his gloves, and backed away. He scarcely offered any blows in return for the heavy rain of gloved clouts which played upon his ribs and his breadbasket. He just backed and kept on backing.

Above the disappointed murmurs of the multitude rose the deep bass tones of our friend:

"That's right, Kid," shouted Lewis, "ignore him! Ignore him!"

§ 236 Mistaken Identity

A haggard-looking individual encounters an acquaintance on the street. The following dialogue then ensues:

"So you were at the meeting of the Civic Improvement Forum yesterday? My wife was there. Did she speak?"

"Well, I don't know your wife but there was one tall, slender lady with a very intent expression who arose——"

"That must have been my wife. Go on."

"She arose and said she could not find the words to express her feelings."

"That couldn't have been my wife!"

§ 237 One of Those Vacant Lots

The youth who entered the dentist's office wished to have a tooth drawn. The officiating practitioner stared at the new patient curiously. The young man had a vacant stare; his face was without expression; his lower jaw hung slightly agape. It appeared to be the sort of jaw which naturally would hang agape.

The dentist excused himself.

"One moment, please," he said, and leaving the sufferer in the chair he slipped out of the operating room and summoned his assistant.

"You saw that young fellow, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, he ought to have gas—this job is liable to be very painful. But I'm afraid to give him gas."

"Why?" inquired the helper.

"How am I going to be able to tell when he's unconscious?"

§ 238 One Who Could Take a Hint

A friend of mine spends a part of each summer on a ranch in Wyoming. One of his friends there is a cow-hand who answers to the name of "Shorty" because he is upwards of seven feet tall. Shorty has rather a quaint way of expressing himself.

When the Easterner arrived in June of this year for his annual visit Shorty met him at the railroad station with a team and a buckboard. As they started on the six-mile drive to the ranch house the visitor asked the news of the neighborhood. Finally the conversation worked around to Shorty's personal affairs.

"How about that pretty girl over on Rawhide Creek that you were courting last year about this time?" asked my friend. "Still going to see her, I suppose?"

"Naw," said Shorty. "I gave that girl up."

"Why so?"

"Well, I sort of got the idea that her paw didn't exactly care to have me hangin' 'round."

"What gave you that notion?"

"Oh, somethin' that happened."

"What happened? Maybe you were only over-sensitive?"

"Mebbe I was. Still, it looked to me like a hint. I went over there one Saturday night to see her and I was settin' in the parlor talkin' to her with my arm sort of around her, when all of a sudden the door opened and the old man come bustin' in with a six gun in his hand and took a couple of shots at me, so I jest stepped out of the winder and went away without waitin' for my hat or to say 'good-bye' or nuthin'. And after I'd cleared the fence I seen him come out and shovel all my tracks out of the yard. Somehow I really don't believe that old man keers for me."

§ 239 Confidential Information

It is harking back into the dim corridors of sporting history to call up memories of the time when Billy Murray was manager of the

Philadelphia team in the National League. Nevertheless, the opportunity to revive a baseball classic is, I think, sufficient justification for directing the reader's attention to these reminiscent days.

Murray, as I say, was manager and Murray had a bitter wit. Kitty Bransford was playing first base. Stanley Covelskie, the Pole, was one of the pitching staff and one of the best men on it.

One afternoon at the Polo Grounds when the Philadelphia team was playing the Giants, Coveleskie became abstracted, which was a very bad thing for any pitcher opposing the Giants to do. He passed a batter and thereafter paid so little attention that the runner stole second and then, a moment later, third, and finally scored home on a high fly to the outfield.

When the inning ended Stanley came walking in to the visiting players' bench looking rather abashed. Murray, who could use very stylish language when the occasion seemed to warrant such, hailed him in his most ceremonious manner.

"Mr. Coveleskie," he inquired, "did you happen to recall, just before you went to sleep standing up out there in the box with your eyes open, that there was a man on first base?"

"No," confessed the Pole, "I plumb forgot all about it."

"Oh, you forgot about it?" echoed Murray, elaborating his sarcasm. He turned to his first baseman: "Mr. Bransford, one moment if you please. Hereafter when a player on the opposite side reaches your station I wish you would please inform our young friend, Mr. Stanley Coveleskie, of the fact, won't you? It seems so foolish to have any secrets in the club."

§ 240 The Gift of Eloquence

Once upon a time, I was in London. I spent a good share of my time at the Savage Club.

One of the most popular members of the Savage was a well-known journalist who was renowned, above all his other distinctions, for these things: the size and bushiness of his red mustache and the keenness of his wit. Alcohol seemed only to stimulate his faculties. The heavier his load of Scotch the quicker his humor would be. The only trouble was that when he reached a certain point his tongue grew so thick and so unruly that it was difficult to make out what he was saying.

On a certain evening there had been quite a good deal of sincere drinking. At midnight the journalist came forth into Adelphi Terrace bound for home. The hall porter assisted him. His legs

dragged, his body was limp, his mustache dangled, lanky and damp; but his nimble brain, as subsequently developed, was in working order.

He was boosted into a cab.

"W'ot address, Gov'ner?" inquired the driver.

Now, the prospective passenger lived at one of those addresses which was Number something-or-other, such-and-such a road in such-and-such a crescent of such-and-such a circle in such-and-such a subdivision—altogether a typically complicated semi-suburban London address. In reply to the cabby's question he undertook to make answer. Twice, thrice he tried. But only bumbling, mumbling meaningless sounds issued from beneath that moist red overhang which cloaked his laboring lips.

A fellow-clubman, standing by, came to the rescue. He knew where his friend lived; besides, he had not been pouring Scotches into himself for hours on a stretch. Briskly, without a slip or a break, he rattled off the proper address.

The inebriate poked his head from the taxi window. Admiration shone in his eye as he cried out:

"Why, you gifted elocutionist!"

§ 241 A Memory out of the Misty Past

A really good story achieves immortality—it never dies and it never should. For proof of the truth of this, consider the following tale which, in various forms, has been current ever since its birth, thirty-odd years ago:

A distinguished citizen of Louisville—so the most popular version has it—went to a dinner one night and stayed late. It was two o'clock in the morning when he reached his house afoot. In front of the house was a very small yard, hardly more than an ornamental grassplot; and in the exact center of it stood a maple sapling with a two-inch butt. The Kentuckian made for the door, but tacked off at an angle and bumped into the little treelet. He made a fresh start, executed a wide and uncertain detour—and came back smack up against the maple. This time he put his back against its swaying trunk in order to be sure of getting the direction right—and off he went again, plowing up the grass. It wasn't any use—he circled the lawn twice, but he finished up holding on to the sapling.

Thereupon he sat himself on the earth with great care, removed his hat, his shoes, and his dress-coat, and rolled up the dress-coat for a pillow; and as he sank to rest beneath the stars he muttered in a voice of resignation:

"Lost, by Heaven!—lost, in the midsh of an impen'trable foresh!"

§ 242 Wisdom in High Places

A man lately back from sinless Hollywood brings with him two anecdotes regarding a strictly self-made gentleman who holds an important, indeed a commanding position, in one of the biggest of the studios. This gentleman chooses subjects for screening; he casts the companies; he passes on details of location, of costuming and of treatment; he bosses the directors and he issues orders to the actors.

Not so very long ago, he was told that the editorial department of his plant looked with an eye of favor on the project of making a film version of "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." Promptly he put his foot down on it.

"Nix," he said; "we positifly wouldn't do it. The public is fed up on these here college plays with football players for heroes."

A few days later he personally was supervising the taking of certain scenes of a comedy. In the script prepared from the author's scenario by the continuity writer he came upon a line to the effect that the leading woman should be pictured as seated alone in a deep reverie.

"Come with me, you," he said indicating the assistant director, the leading lady and the camera-man. "I know just the place for taking this here piece of business."

He loaded the three of them into an automobile, got in himself and bade the driver take them along a certain road winding into the foothills above Los Angeles. After an hour or so of steady travel they came to where a narrow but precipitous canyon cut into the contours of the landscape. Here the leader of the expedition gave orders to halt.

"There you are," he stated, with a wave of his arm, "you could look for a week and nowhere you wouldn't find no deeper reverie for her to be setting in than what this one is."

§ 243 The Finding of the Remains

It was a visiting Englishman, newly arrived in our land, who entered a table d'hote restaurant in a Louisiana town with intent to dine. The establishment, being near the coast, specialized in sea foods.

To the stranger the two opening courses were both in the nature of novelties. However, he partook freely of the crawfish gumbo and the shrimp Creole. But when the waiter brought him an individual oyster patty containing one large swollen Bayou Cook oyster enveloped in fluffy pastry, the Britisher's eyes widened.

Gingerly he touched the contents with his fork. Then, with an expression of mingled surprise and distress upon his face, he hailed the head-waiter, who chanced to be passing his table.

"Whut's de trouble, boss?" inquired that functionary, ranging up alongside.

"Really, I carn't say," stated the startled patron; "but it would appear that something has crawled into my bun and expired there."

§ 244 Greetings on the High Seas

The skipper of a certain transatlantic liner was noted for his grouchiness. There was a saying that while at sea he never addressed a word to anyone save in the line of duty.

So one morning there was a profound shock among the group assembled on the sun-deck when a breezy and self-confident individual ranged up and spoke as follows:

"Where do you fellows get that stuff about the old man never being sociable with passengers? Why, only a few minutes ago I had quite a pleasant little conversation with him."

"You did?" gasped a fellow-traveler. "Well, all I've got to say is that I've made twelve voyages on this steamship and this is the first time I ever heard of his breaking down like that. Why, this is historic. Exactly what happened? Do you mean to say he really exchanged remarks with you?"

"I certainly do. I spoke to him and he spoke back to me. It was like this: We met face to face in a companionway and I said: 'Good morning, Captain. Nice day, isn't it?' and he said: 'You blanketty bland idiot, what the hell do you mean by smoking that cigar in the ladies' writing-room?'"

§ 245 Proof from an Eye Witness

According to *Tid-Bits,* which is a very sprightly English publication, the official bore of a certain London club had the floor.

"When I was out in India," said the official bore, "I saw a tiger come down to the river where some women were washing clothes.

It was a very fierce tiger, but one woman, with great presence of mind, splashed some water in its face—and it slunk away."

"Gentlemen," said a quiet-mannered member of the group, "I can vouch for the absolute truth of this story. Some minutes after the incident which our friend described had occurred, I was going down to the same river. I met this tiger and, as is my habit when meeting a tiger, stroked its whiskers. Gentlemen, those whiskers were wringing wet!"

§ 246 The Temperamental Hound-Dawg

About once in so often—which is often enough—some impassioned partisan rises up in Congress or elsewhere and accuses the majority party or the administration or somebody of bribery, corruption, fraud and incompetency, and announces his intention of smoking the scoundrels out. This type of person is especially numerous in Presidential years but we have him other years, too.

A few years ago—it was in 1916, I believe—there was a prominent spellbinder on the Republican side who set forth upon his campaigning with the avowed intention of proving that wholesale Democratic stupidity at Washington had practically ruined the country and then, being challenged for facts to back up his accusation, was so shy of actual ammunition that for the moment he could point only to the instance of a petty office-holder, a hold-over from the Taft administration who, in alleged violation of Civil Service rules, had been ousted from his job to make room for a Wilson man.

The incident reminded a friend of mine down South of a certain gifted hound dog which a certain Kentucky pioneer owned. He said to me:

"The old fellow used to tell me that when his father came out over the Wilderness Trail from North Carolina he brought with him the fastest, the best-bred, the keenest-nosed hound that had ever been seen in the infant settlements beyond the mountains. But the dog suffered from a temperamental defect, which militated against his success.

"At sunrise he would start out on his own hook after deer. He would jump a buck and run him for miles. When the buck was on the point of exhaustion the hound's nostrils would catch the taint in the air where a fox had crossed the trail, and he would instantly decide that, after all, fox was what he had come for; and he would turn aside to pursue the fox.

"Perhaps an hour later, when the chase was growing warmer

every minute, his keen nose would detect the presence of a rabbit, and he would go after the cottontail, with the inevitable result that by four o'clock in the afternoon that hound would be thirty or forty miles away from home, in a swamp, with a chipmunk treed!"

§ 247 Deadlocked

It is said that the three thriftiest races are the Scotch, the Armenian and the Greek.

Conceded that this is true, it possibly accounts for the fact that a Scotchman, a Greek and an Armenian were fast friends. After a long absence they met and it was decided by joint consent that the reunion should be celebrated with a dinner at a fashionable restaurant. Just who was to play host for the occasion was a point which no one of the three brought up beforehand.

The food was good and there was plenty of it. One course followed another. At eight o'clock, the coffee and cheese having been served, the waiter brought the check and put it upon the table.

Long after midnight the Scotchman temporarily excused himself from his two confrères and called his house on the telephone. His wife answered the call.

"Is that you, Jean?" he asked. "Well, say, Jean, listen. I'm going to be very late getting home. I may not get home until morning. I'm down town here with a couple of friends talking business —and it looks like we're in a deadlock!"

§ 248 Bestowing the Proper Rank

There was great excitement in the cozy home of the Jones' out on Long Island. A real Lord was paying them a visit. Mr. and Mrs. Jones had met His Lordship while coming back from their first European trip, and graciously the great man had accepted their invitation that he spend his first week-end as a guest under their roof.

He had arrived. He had been welcomed. He was now sitting down to his first meal at the Jones' table. Mrs. Jones fluttered as she urged My Lord to eat heartily. Mr. Jones, beginning or ending every sentence with the noble word "Lord", was swollen with a sense of the honor which had descended upon his household. The whole proceedings were being invested with a reverential, not to say worshipful, air.

As a special privilege—a thing which he might talk about in his

maturer years—little Willie Jones, aged five, had been permitted to attend the function, on condition that he refrain from speaking unless first spoken to. Mindful of his pledge, the little fellow sat in silence, his large round eyes fixed in a stare upon the face and form of the stranger.

But an innate sense of hospitality moved him to break the promise when he saw how the visitor's eye roamed hither and yon across the laden board as though seeking for something.

"Mom!" said Willie. "Oh, Mom!"

"What is it, Willie?" asked his mother.

"God wants a pickle."

§ 249 The Home of a Great Healer

Wherever old-time showmen congregate the name of "Doc" Clifton is familiar. For he was one of the most famous among those members of the profession who travel with perambulating amusement enterprises.

It wasn't that he particularly excelled in the cure-alls he offered to the public, because "Doc" bought his stocks where his brother practitioners bought theirs. The names on the bottles might vary but the contents invariably were the same.

Where the "Doc" stood forth resplendent was in the realm of eloquence. No other sidewalk specialist of his day ever equalled him there. His line of talk was convincing, graphic and eloquent.

For example:

"Friends, I am the champion lightning dentist of the world," he would say, by way of a starter. "Let any man with three bad teeth in his head step up on this platform and I will have the third tooth out of his mouth before the first hits the floor.

"And you, sitting down there with your hand to your ear. You ask me if I specialize in rheumatism. Let me tell you something, my friend.

"I live in Dallas, Texas, where I own something of an estate. There is a frontage of two hundred fifty feet and a depth of three hundred. The estate is entirely surrounded by a crutch-and-cane fence and I have a tooth sidewalk."

§ 250 The Man with the Asbestos Lining

James J. Corbett claims this thing really happened. I give it in his own words.

"After I won the championship of the world by licking John L. Sullivan, I naturally became one of the most widely known persons on this continent. Wherever I went people knew me by my picture and stopped me and introduced themselves and wanted to talk with me. At first, so much fame was agreeable. I throve on publicity. But after a while, when the edge had worn off the novelty of it, I began craving a little privacy. I found out what many another man has found out before me; that being forever in the public eye was a thing that had its drawbacks.

"One summer night, being for a wonder alone, I slipped into a quiet saloon on the Bowery for a glass of beer. Besides the barkeeper there was only one person in the place—an old Irishman in his shirtsleeves. Of course the barkeeper had to recognize me and as he spoke my name, the old fellow gave a snort of joy and threw himself on me and grabbed my hand and pump-handled it and wouldn't let go of it and began talking.

"I didn't want to hurt his feelings, being Irish myself. But he almost talked my arm off. He asked a thousand questions. How did I lick Sullivan? Did I think I could lick the next man I was going to fight? What sort of a fighter was Jake Kilrain? Would Charley Mitchell have a chance against me? And so on and so forth. Language poured from him in a steady stream. I broke in long enough to invite him to join me in a drink and without missing a beat he ordered beer, too, downed it at one swallow and kept right on.

"I was getting desperate. I tried to edge away from him but he followed me down the bar, hanging on to my elbow and firing more questions at me, at the rate of one every second. All of a sudden my eye fell on a bottle of tabasco sauce on a side table almost behind me. I reached out with my free arm and grabbed that bottle, unscrewed the cap and winked at the barkeeper. He caught my meaning and drew two more beers and placed them on the bar in front of us. Then, on another signal from me he distracted the old Irishman's attention for a moment and I emptied the whole bottle of red-hot liquid hell-fire into the old fellow's beer.

"It was a cruel thing to do but I was desperate. I figured that the pepper would burn the inside of that mouth of his to a blister and while the barkeeper was extinguishing him I'd escape.

"The old boy swung around—the two of us watching him—and lifted his schooner.

" 'Well, Jimmie, me bye,' he said, 'here's lookin' at ye!'

"With one gulp he downed that devilish brew, and as we waited for him to give a howl of agony and for the flames to burst out of

his nose and his ears, he set the emptied mug down, wiped his lips with the back of his hand and said:

"'Jimmie, tell me now—whativer become of Nonpar'el Jack Dimpsey?'"

§ 251 How the Orders Got Mixed

Joe Lincoln, the novelist, who writes about New England coast types so graphically and with such humor, was a guest at a dinner which I also attended not so very long ago. In the course of the speech-making the toastmaster called upon his distinguished friend on the right—meaning by that, Joe—to favor the assemblage with a few remarks.

Mr. Lincoln obliged. Nearing the conclusion of his talk, he was reminded of a story of his beloved Cape Cod and speaking in a delicious Down East drawl, to match the locale, he told it. It ran about as follows:

"In a little fishing town where I often go in the summer, there used to be a curious old character. He was a boat-builder by trade—made dories and skiffs and smacks, as no other man in those parts could. Also he occasionally was called upon to fashion a coffin.

"Another resident of the village fell grievously ill. The doctor admitted that the sick man could last only a few hours longer. So a party of the patient's friends went to wait upon the old boat-builder at his shop and ask him to make a coffin of suitable size and have it ready when the bereavement actually occurred.

"The old fellow balked. It seemed, he didn't like his neighbor who was dying. Even under the circumstances, he declined to forget the grudge. Besides, as he stated he was a boat-builder by trade, not a casket-maker and finally, he was busy on a very special job. And the long and short of it was that he wouldn't stop now to make a coffin for anybody.

"The delegation withdrew to consult further. They had exhausted their stock of arguments. But one of the group had an inspiration. He went away and presently returned with a jug of rum and, going to the shop, presented the rum to the old chap with his compliments, and once more renewed the request that he fill the order designed for the future use of the man with whom he had the feud.

"The boat-builder listened to reason and accepted the peace-offering. From behind the closed doors of his establishment the listeners could hear a great hammering and planing and sawing.

Toward evening these sounds ceased. They went up to the door and knocked. There was no answer. So they forced an entrance.

"The old fellow was lying asleep on a pile of shavings in a corner. Alongside him, was the jug and it was empty.

"But on a trestle in the middle of the room stood the completed coffin, lid and all. There was just one unusual feature. It had a rudder on it."

§ 252 The Bare Facts of the Case

It is stated that the pastor of a colored congregation in the South so pestered his bishop with requests for help that it devolved upon the latter to write him a letter stating that in future such appeals would be entirely disregarded.

Pretty soon, though, another letter came from the minister. The bishop opened it. It read as follows:

"Dear Bishop:
"This here ain't no appeal.
"It's a report.
"I has no pants!"

§ 253 A Little Tale of a Wayside Tee

Golfers have laughed over the story of the methodical but absent-minded professional who having just made a satisfactory drive was preparing to move along the fairway when, from behind the wall of a sand-pit abutting on the adjacent green, there burst a wild-eyed, white-faced amateur.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the newcomer. "Come quick! I've just killed my wife."

"Where?" inquired the professional, intent, as any really seasoned golfer's mind should be, upon the game.

"Right over here in this bunker."

"How?"

"I swung with my niblick and——"

"Is that so?" said the professional, preparing to move on. "Well, the niblick is the proper club for a bunker."

§ 254 Betrayed by the Hand of Science

Ben Burt, the song-writer, made a bet with a traveling trouper on mutual abstinence for a set period. The terms of the bet were known to a fairly large colony in New York and Ben was left under

the observation of the stakeholder while the actor went away to skip from town to town unobserved.

Burt had no reason to suspect the actor of cheating, but just to be on the safe side wrote him as follows:

"I removed the stamp from your last letter and turned it over to a chemist to be analyzed. He tells me that it fairly reeks with whiskey."

§ 255 Congratulations for a Reporter

In the latter years of his life Mark Twain turned hostile to interviewers. He complained that whenever he went anywhere the local newspaper would send its brightest young man to call upon him and ask questions of him, and that then the youth would return to the office and either misquote what Twain had said or slip his own efforts at humor into the story and credit them to Twain.

So, eventually he declined to see any journalists excepting by appointment and with the understanding that what was written must be submitted to him before it went into type, in order that he might correct what was wrong. But when he went on a visit to his boyhood home in Missouri and a reporter came around the great man broke the rule.

A callow-looking youngster was ushered into his presence. Twain, lying in bed, glanced from under his bushy eyebrows at the caller and said:

"Well, sir, what can I do for you?"

Somewhat nervously the youngster consulted his notes.

"Mr. Clemens," he began, "what was the most interesting event you ever witnessed in your life?"

"The funeral of Aaron Burr," answered the humorist instantly.

The reporter knit his brows.

"E—excuse me, sir," he stammered, "but didn't he die a good many years before you were born?"

"Young man," exclaimed Twain, "come over and let me clasp your hand! You're the first newspaperman I've seen in years who discovered a mistake before he printed it!"

§ 256 A Vulgarian Unmasked

In New York is a certain pool and billiard hall much frequented by writers, baseball players and actors. Also, it is a favorite loafing place for a number of more or less interesting characters. Among

the regular habitués is an elderly gentleman known as "the Major," whose conversational specialty is to claim a close personal acquaintance with the people, habits, customs, languages and peculiarities of practically all the out-of-the-way places of the earth. It has been estimated that if the Major had visited all the far countries he says he has visited, and had spent as much time in each of them as he says he has spent there, he would now be considerably over three hundred years old.

Not long ago some one in his presence mentioned Zululand. That was a sufficient cue for the Major. For twenty minutes he edified the audience with an account of an expedition led by him into the uttermost wilds of Zululand, where, according to his statement, he was entertained for many months by a chief from whom the Major professed to have acquired a fluent knowledge of the native tongues and dialects.

The next day a newspaper artist, who was born in Spain and who has a complexion almost as dark as a Moor's, dropped in. Seeing him, the proprietor had an inspiration. He told his plan to the artist and to half a dozen others; and then, followed by the rest, he led the illustrator to where the Major sat and introduced the pair to each other, giving to the swarthy stranger an unpronounceable name.

"Major," added the proprietor, "this gentleman is a Zulu who has been in America many years. He is homesick for the sound of his own language again. That's why I have brought him to you. He wants to talk to you."

This was the signal for the dark conspirator. Clinging fast to the Major's hand, he poured out a stream of mingled Spanish and Portuguese, with clucks, grunts and gurgles interpolated.

The Major listened intently until the other paused for breath. Then, with a mighty snort of disdain, he wrested himself free; and as he broke through the circle and stalked out he called back over his shoulder to the plotters:

"Never allow that person to come near me again. Why, the vulgarian doesn't speak anything but Low Zuluese!"

§ 257 Past Tense but Present Mood

There is a writer in New York who never does today what he can put off until tomorrow. All the same, among the editors, his output is always in demand. Some time ago, in a careless moment, he took on a contract to furnish a given number of humorous articles at stated intervals for publication in a popular periodical.

One day about noontime two of us dropped in on him at his office. We found him humped up at his desk, his coat off, his sleeves rolled up, and his pen racing across the paper.

"Come on, old man," I said, "we want to take you out to lunch with us."

"Can't go to lunch," he said. "Can't quit the job. You know how I am—if I go out to lunch with you fellows I won't get back for two or three days. I'm going to send a boy out to bring me in a cup of coffee and a sandwich.

"Can't you spare even half an hour to join us?" asked my companion.

"No, I can't. I tell you, I can't leave here until this job I'm working on now is done. There's a time limit on it and I'm under a solemn pledge to stick here until the thing is finished.

"A time limit, eh?" one of us said; "well, under your promise, what is the very latest possible date when you must deliver the manuscript?"

He glanced at the calendar above his desk:

"A week ago last Tuesday," he said.

§ 258 No Treat to the Visitor

William Slavins McNutt, the short story writer and war correspondent, used to be a reporter in Seattle. One time, he says, his city editor sent him out to get an interview with an Alaska miner who had just returned to the states after twenty years spent in the far North.

"Be sure, Bill," said his chief, "to ask him what he thinks about the new Smith building." An hour later McNutt returned to the office.

"I didn't get much of a story out of the old chap," he confessed.

"What did he have to say about the Smith building?" asked the disappointed city editor.

"He allowed it was pretty tall."

"Thunder, man, was that all you could get out of him? Pretty tall—I'll say it is. Didn't you tell him that it's the tallest office-building on the Pacific coast—four hundred ten feet from the pavement to the top of the tower?"

"Yes," said McNutt, "I did tell him all that, but it didn't seem much use. You see, for the last fourteen years he's been living in a cabin against the foot of a cliff six thousand feet high."

§ 259 Among the Fur-Bearers

A large family came to America some years back from Russia. The emigrants prospered in their new home.

Eventually they left the East Side and moved uptown to a more expensive quarter.

They suffered under the handicap of having one of those unpronounceable Slavic names. So the head of the household took the proper steps to have it changed. Legally he became Mr. Fisher and his wife became Mrs. Fisher and all the children became little Fishers. Even the old grandmother accepted the change.

The trouble with her, though, was that being of an advanced age and of a somewhat faulty memory she sometimes couldn't remember it. There was an embarassing pause one day when she entered a large department store where her son had a charge account and, having made a purchase, couldn't recall what the name was.

"Ve got a nice name now," said the old lady in her broken English, "but I couldn't seem to think vot it is."

"What does it sound like?" prompted the floorwalker, who had been summoned by the clerk to deal with this unusual emergency.

"I couldn't dell you," said the bewildered customer. "All vot I could tell you is we are named for a small animal vot has fur on it."

"Ah," cried the floorwalker, "don't you worry. We'll send the goods right up—Mrs. Kolinsky."

§ 260 The Full of the Honeymoon

In Chicago a vaudeville comedian married a lady who was likewise connected with the profession. Immediately after the ceremony he left his bride in her room and went to the nearest blind tiger where, meeting a number of very congenial friends, he proceeded to celebrate the recent event fittingly. Several happy hours passed.

Toward dusk the bridegroom went to the telephone and called up his hotel and asked to be connected with his room. His wife answered. In a slightly husky voice he said:

"Is that you, friend wife? Well, this is friend husband. I just made a date for dinner. How're things breaking for you?"

§ 261 Providing a Clean Bill of Health

On a voyage back from France after hostilities had ended, one of the transports had aboard a negro labor battalion. Included

among the returning veterans of the Brest docks was a crap shooter of mighty powers, originally from Memphis.

Off the Banks the ship ran into nasty weather, and the gamester, frightfully seasick, lay in his bunk too miserable and too weak to move, and expecting each succeeding moment to be his last, as the craft stood first on end and then wallowed deep in the trough of the sea. As a matter of fact, the peril was real. The laboring steamer had blundered off her course and was dangerously near the shores of Newfoundland. Suddenly in the middle of the night a siren steam whistle at a lighthouse station on the mainland blared out, the sound rising above the roar of the wind. To the sufferer in bed down below, that appaling blast could mean but one thing—the trumpet call of judgment day.

He got down on his knees and prepared to uplift his voice in prayer for salvation. Then he remembered what he carried in his trousers pockets. He reached in his pocket and as he flung into space his educated ivories he cried out:

"Git away, evidences! Come on, Angel Gabriel!"

§ 262 More Fireworks

Some years ago a New York millionaire of varied matrimonial adventures had a falling out with two young persons of the chorus. The disagreement reached its climax at his apartments on an evening when they called, bringing revolvers with them. Shortly thereafter he was removed to a hospital suffering from bullet wounds in his legs and the young ladies were taken to jail. They were indicted and tried. By reason of the prominence of the victim the trial was what is called "a sensational trial." The newspapers were full of it and the defendants became, for the time being, celebrities.

Upon their release they were vouchsafed an opportunity to capitalize their notoriety. Under the title of "The Shooting Show Girls" they were on for a week at one of the Broadway roof-gardens with the promise of a more extended booking provided their act justified it. For the opening night's performance a capacity audience gathered but, in all charity, it must be stated that the featured act proved a disappointment.

Aside from the facts that neither of the stars could dance, or sing, or speak her lines, or wear her costumes effectively and that both of them suffered from stage-fright they did very well, considering.

On the following night, Jim Thornton, the old vaudeville comedian,

was present to see them. He stood at the back of the house watching the scene on the stage with an inscrutable expression on his face. The manager ranged up alongside him:

"Well, Jim," he said, "what do you think of the girls, heh?"

Thornton cleared his throat:

"If," he said magisterially, "—if the young women desire a second week's engagement they must shoot him again!"

§ 263 The Ruling Habit

Two youths from a small upstate town organized a vaudeville team and got a job with a burlesque theatre on Fourteenth Street, New York. That was in the days of continuous performances. They had a refined singing and clogging act, beginning appropriately like this:

"Oh, how we love to sing and dance!"
(Vamp with feet.)

On their first day as professionals they were sent out upon the stage at half-hour intervals. They opened the afternoon performance and between that time and 11.45 that night when they closed the show they appeared eighteen times, each time to say and do exactly the same things.

Long before quitting time their voices were croaky, their legs were ready to drop off at the knees, and their makeup was streaked with sweat. They dared not take off their dancing shoes for their feet were so swollen they knew they could never get them back on again. They would drag themselves to their dressing-room and collapse in exhausted heaps only to be roused a few minutes later by the voice of the relentless call-boy as he pounded at the door and yelled to them to turn out.

At midnight their torture ended. They staggered to their hall bedroom in a theatrical boarding house 'round the corner in Irving Place, and, too tired to undress, fell upon the bed just as they were, shoes and all. A lodger downstairs overturned a lamp and the house caught fire. The proprietor ran from floor to floor and room to room beating on each door with his fists and yelling:

"Turn out! Turn out quick!"

Dimly through their slumber the new recruits to vaudeville heard him. They got upon their feet, their eyes closed, and still three-fourths asleep.

The firemen, breaking in at the window, ten minutes later, found

them there in the smoke and flame, side by side with arms intertwined, automatically clogging as they hoarsely chanted:

"Oh, how we love to sing and dance!"

§ 264 Taking the Pledge

A battered veteran of the regular army, who had been wounded at Chateau Thierry was visited by a chaplain. The latter inquired regarding his well-being and expressed the hope that the soldier would live to wear the uniform for a great many years to come.

"Well, Padre," said the old-timer, "so far as I'm concerned I'll tell you how the thing stands: Before this here World's War came along I thought I'd had a lot of experience and had seen my share of hard campaignin'. I served in Cuby and in the Phillippines, and when the Indians acted hostile I went on the scout after them several times, out West. But we didn't have to deal with pizen gases or high explosive shells the size of galvanized iron ash-cans in any of them little mixups. Padre, I ain't lost my gimp and I wouldn't hang back if Uncle Sam wanted me to help mop up anybody that went on the rampage back home in God's country. But strictly in confidence, I don't mind tellin' you that this here is goin' to be my last World's War."

§ 265 A Devil Unloosed

There is a saying—and one more or less justified by the trend of affairs in our nation—to the effect that these days, the ambition of the average man who was raised on a farm is to leave the country and go to live in the city in order to earn enough money to be able to leave the city and go back to live in the country. Here is a little story about a youth who did not wait until he was grown up to make the start.

As a youth, he quit the ancestral acres and hiked for the metropolis. After ups and down he prospered. Before so very long he held a responsible position and had a home of his own. After considerable persuasion he induced his aged father to pay him a visit. The old gentleman had a distrust for cities and for city ways. He was wedded to the soil and all his life had been faithful to the union.

Eventually, though, he stemmed into New York, was met and greeted at the station by his boy and escorted to the latter's bachelor apartment.

The son thought the occasion called for a special celebration. He

burrowed in his treasured pre-war stock and produced a quart of the precious vintages of France.

"What's that?" inquired the old man as the son began the operation leading up to the removal of the stopper.

"That's champagne, Dad," said the son.

"Well, I don't mind a nip of hard cider once't in awhile, as you know," said the visitor; "but I ain't so shore about that there stuff. Lemme have a look at her fust."

He took the bottle in his horny hands and subjected the cork to a close scrutiny. Then, as he handed it back, he shook his aged head and said:

"No, son, I reckin not. If it takes five wires to hold it in now, what's it goin' to do when it starts runnin' wild inside of me?"

§ 266 Alone in the World!

Around a camp fire up in the Minnesota wilds a group of visiting fishermen were resting after a long hard day among the bass and pickerel. One of the guides had just arrived from the nearest town, fifteen miles away, with a two-days-old city newspaper.

While the others lolled at ease and stoked their pipes and slapped at the skeeters, a volunteer read aloud the principal items of news.

"Here's something interesting," he said, as his eye ran down a front page column. "Do you fellows remember here a few weeks back about a sixteen-year-old kid down South who killed his father and his mother with an ax while they were asleep? Well, there's a dispatch here telling about it and his trial. The jury found him guilty of murder in the first degree. But then they recommended him to the mercy of the court. I wonder why they did that?"

One of the listeners spoke up:

"Probably on the ground that the poor boy was an orphan."

§ 267 Direct Proof

A lady residing in a suburb became interested in a gang of workmen who were making some street repairs in front of her house. She halted to watch the operations.

"Which one is the foreman?" she asked.

"I am," stated a broad-shouldered Irishman with a proud smile.

"Really, are you?" she asked.

"Am I?" he said. "I'll prove it to ye, ma'am." He glanced about, singling out the nearest workman.

"Dugan," he barked, "ye're fired!"

§ 268 The Law of Supply and Demand

P. T. Barnum, at the outset of his career as a showman, originated the idea of the Happy Family, taking his cue from that prophecy of Holy Writ wherein it is stated that the lion and the lamb eventually shall lie down together.

The thing proved a sensation. On the opening day, following advertisements in the daily press, crowds flocked to Barnum's museum to stand in front of a cage wherein, with no bars to separate them, were displayed a lion, a tiger, and a panther, and in the midst of these a gentle lambkin, all four dwelling together in seeming amity. News of the marvelous wonder spread and the patronage increased by leaps and bounds. Nevertheless, Mr. Barnum appeared, at times, worried.

When the spectacle was two weeks old a friend inquired of him how the Happy Family seemed to be getting along.

"Oh, fairly well," said the great showman. "I am going to make a permanent feature of it if the supply of lambs holds out!"

§ 269 Justifiable Homicide

The ambitious youth had saved his money and opened a small booth in the public market. His specialty was to be sea-food. He prepared his own signboard. It read as follows:

STRICTLY FRESH FISH FOR SALE HERE.

An acquaintance came along and looked the establishment over.

"Say," he suggested, "that sign is too long. Why say 'strictly'? If your fish are fresh it naturally follows that they're strictly fresh. To say 'strictly' isn't convincing; it arouses suspicion."

The young proprietor saw the force of the argument. So he shortened the legend by striking out the first word.

Next day another friend happened by.

"Why the word 'here'?" he asked. "Of course you've got fresh fish on sale here—anybody will know that much without being told. People won't look at your stock and think you've got fish on sale elsewhere. You don't want to make your customers look foolish."

So the owner chopped off a word at the other end so that now the sign merely carried this announcement:

FRESH FISH FOR SALE.

But a third well-wisher turned up with yet another argument.

"What's the idea of saying 'for sale'?" he queried. "You aren't

in business to give away fish. You aren't loaning fish. You're selling 'em. Well, that ought to be plain to all parties without your advertising the fact. Short, snappy stuff—that's the proper notion these times."

So another change was made.

A fourth critic thought, though, that "Fresh Fish" was a mistake. Who would dare to offer fish that weren't fresh to a discriminating public?

"Just the one word 'Fish' is all you need," he said. So once more the legend was reduced.

But the first objector returned.

"I've been thinking things over, Bill," he stated, "and I've come to a conclusion. Naturally, I want to see you succeed. And therefore I'd hate to see you make any mistakes. You've got to give your prospective patrons credit for a little sense. When they come along here and see a lot of fish in the window, more fish in the ice-boxes and nothing but fish in sight, they'll understand that you're not retailing garden-truck or second-hand furniture or boots and shoes. You'd better have that board taken down altogether before you insult somebody's intelligence."

So then the youth snatched the sign down and killed the adviser with it. And the jury acquitted him on the grounds of justifiable homicide.

§ 270 A Vivid Description, Truly

Montague Glass was writing to a friend in the East from a cottage near San Diego.

"From where I am now seated"—so Glass said—"the Mexican town of Tia Juana is distant just twelve miles by a good concrete road. There are but few formalities at the border, and across it the Volstead Act loses its entire force and effect. Every evening there is a steady stream of automobiles from the city of San Diego, and once past the Mexican Custom House the thirsty tourist hastens to the nearest bar. The bars are all well stocked with the usual Scotch and rye, and while the bulk of the American trade is confined to these two staples, some of the more venturesome have recourse to an odd-shaped bottle containing a colorless liquid. It is called Tequila and four glasses of it will induce all the symptoms of cerebrospinal meningitis complicated with leprosy.

"A fellow I know took just one small pony of it the other day. He reached home alive.

" 'How was it?' I asked.

"'It was like a torchlight procession going down your throat,' he replied, 'broken up by the police force with nightsticks.'"

§ 271 Scandal Had No Appeal for Her

The recent death of the great Kentucky writer, James Lane Allen, revived in my mind a story which centered about the title of perhaps his most famous novel.

The story was that an elderly lady of a somewhat severe and spinsterish aspect entered a bookstore. She explained to the clerk that she wanted a book for entertainment on a train journey—preferably fiction.

"Well," he said, picking up a volume, "here is one which is very popular at present—The Kentucky Cardinal."

"I do not believe I'd care to read about a religious dignitary," she said.

"But Madam," explained the dealer, "this Kentucky cardinal was a bird."

"His private life means nothing to me," she answered, with a deep chill in her voice. "If you have no chaste works that you can recommend, I'll go elsewhere."

§ 272 One Thing at a Time

According to Hap Ward, of the old team of Ward and Vokes, a colored man in Texas was enjoying the first watermelon of the season.

As the celebrant sat in the back door of the general store working on his third slice, a friend dashed up to him.

"Jim," he gasped, "Jim, dey's bad news fur you. Yore wife jest now fell daid frum heart failure!"

The husband's cry was an inarticulate gurgle.

"Jim!" cried the bearer of ill-tidings, "didn't you heah whut I'm tellin' you? Yore pore wife jest fell daid. Ain't you got no grief to show?"

The widower raised his head until the lower part of his face temporarily had lost connection with the dripping delicacy.

"Boy," he said, "kindly stand 'round yere 'twell I gits th'ough wid dis watermelon an' then I'm goin' show you some grief."

§ 273 Taking in a Partner

A mountaineering gentleman had come down into the lowlands of northern Alabama on court business. On his way down out of the hills, as was plain to see, he had looked upon his native moonshine when it was white. Now he was seeking trouble and he didn't care how soon he found it, either.

In a gait that was a happy compromise between a swagger and a stagger he projected himself into a groggery. The place was fairly well filled. Lurching up to the bar he slammed his fist down upon it and in a loud voice introduced himself to the assembled company after this fashion:

"I'm a tall sycamore frum the mounting. I measure thirty feet to the first limb and I'm hard to climb. I'm free from cat-faces, shakes, knots or woodpecker holes. I don't bend before the roarin' storm and I ain't never been afeard of the jagged lightnin'. Hear me and tremble! I can lick ary six men in this county!"

There was a sudden flurry, a thud of opposing bodies coming into violent collision, the sound of a blow and then the sound of a fall. When the dust cleared away, the tall sycamore of the mountains was flat upon the barroom floor with the local champion seated astride him.

"Do you still think you can lick ary six men in this county?" inquired the champion softly.

"Well, you and me both can lick ary six men in this county," stated the fallen monarch of the forest.

§ 274 A Promise for the Future

Luncheon was over and it was a bit early for tea. So the scholarly young man invited the young lady who was his guest to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art with him.

The young lady was very easy to look at but she had wasted little of her life on books and such. In fact, she was the chief ornament of the chorus of a musical show on Broadway. She didn't know where the Museum was or what it contained. But, as she so aptly remarked, she was willing to try anything once.

So the flattered youth, who was rather proud of his culture, assisted her into his car and drove her up Fifth Avenue to the vast building in the Park. He led her through gallery after gallery and was eloquent upon the beauties of the treasures there exhibited.

The tour was nearing its close. He stood with his fair companion

before a priceless Old Master. She fetched a deep breath. "Great!" she murmured. "Simply immense, get what I mean? I'm so glad I came with you. I ain't never taken up art myself. But listen, kid, if ever I do, I'll certainly make it hum!"

§ 275 Spell the Last Word Either Way

"Now you take this story about the Garden of Eden," said the amateur investigator. "You know the one I mean—the one about Adam and Eve eating the apple.

"Well, I've been looking into that yarn. That is to say, I've been studying it out. And I've decided that an injustice was done the apple.

"As a matter of fact, it wasn't the apple that was to blame.

"It was the green pear!"

§ 276 The Original Purchaser Turns Up

The telephone rang in the office of the famous manufacturer of popular priced cars. The great man's secretary answered the ring.

"Well?" he said.

"This," answered the voice, "this is Mr. J. Henry Begins. I wish to speak with Mr. Blank."

"Mr. Blank is very busy," explained the functionary. "This is his secretary speaking. Can I take the message?"

"You cannot," was the firm reply. "I must speak directly with your chief. I am a customer of your company and what I have to communicate is something which your employer should in person hear from me."

"Well, in that case, kindly hold the wire a moment," said the secretary. He summoned Mr. Blank to the instrument.

"What is it?" inquired the latter gentleman.

"Mr. Blank," stated the unknown patron, "you advertised lately that your concern had turned out a complete car in six minutes."

"Yes, we did. What of it?"

"Well, I'm the guy that bought it!"

§ 277 Rated Among the Curios

The late John M. Scribner, a leader of the New York bar, was as bald as a bat; in fact, he was balder than most bats.

He was speaking to the late Joseph H. Choate about the approaching marriage of one of the Vanderbilts to a foreign nobleman.

"It would be absurd to give a Vanderbilt a costly gift," he said. "I should like to find something not intrinsically valuable but interesting because it is rare."

"Nothing easier," Mr. Choate said. "Just send the young couple a lock of your hair."

§ 278 A Problem in Short Division

Nobody ever denied that the French, Mexican and Italian table d'hôte restaurants of San Francisco in the old days served good food, but before screens for the kitchens and pantries and dining-room windows came into vogue there occasionally was complaint on a different score.

For instance, a rather particular gentleman was entertaining three of his friends at luncheon in one of the most popular of the ancient establishments. The entrée came on. The host looked at it and hailed the attendant:

"See here, waiter," he said, "there are only three flies in this omelette. Now I must insist that the next time I order an omelette for four here, you have either four flies in it or no flies at all. It's a very hard matter to divide three flies equally among four people."

§ 279 The Sports of the Season

It's short, this offering is, but it goes to the point.

"Good morning, Madam," said the caller, on one bright winter morning in the early part of December. "Is your husband at home?"

"He is not," said the lady of the house.

"May I ask where he is?"

"He is down at the pond at the foot of the street."

"Ah, indeed. And may I make so bold as to inquire what he is doing there?"

"Well, if the ice is as thick as he thinks it is, he's gone skating. If it's as thin as I think it is, he's gone swimming."

§ 280 Victims of False Pretenses

Most of us are familiar with the ancient yarn of the man who was so confirmed, so chronic, so incurable a liar that in time the whole

world of his acquaintance, including the dumb brutes, refused to believe a single thing he said, so the result was that even at the feeding hour he had to get a neighbor to call his hogs for him.

There is one of a somewhat later vintage which also has to do with hogs. A stranger was passing through a rural community in Tennessee. He came to where an aged agriculturist with a look of intense asperity leaned against a rail fence watching a drove of bony razorbacks that rooted in a field.

The animals were behaving in a most extraordinary manner. Every few minutes, as though all governed by the same impulse, they would burst through a gap in the fence, dash across the road to a patch of woodland on the opposite side and presently would come racing back again. And seeing this performance repeated several times the traveler hailed the native.

"What ails those pigs, anyway?" he asked.

"They've got too derned much imagination fur their own good, that's what ails them," answered the old man, in a husky whisper. "Them hawgs belongs to me and I used to call 'em to me when I wanted to feed 'em. But last winter I lost my voice so I took to knockin' on a fence rail with a stick an' they mighty soon learned what that meant."

He fetched a deep melancholy sigh.

"And now them derned woodpeckers up in those trees yonder has drove them poor hawgs plum' crazy."

§ 281 The Proper Classification

As may be recalled, Ellis Parker Butler's most famous short story "Pigs is Pigs" had to do with an Hibernian express agent and a pair of guinea pigs. In view of this fact it perhaps is no more than natural that recently when Butler was asked to tell his favorite anecdote he offered the following:

A Britisher, returning to his native shores after long absence in the Colonies brought with him a pet tortoise. By reason of its sedentary habits, his little animal friend was transplanted as easily as the rest of his luggage was.

In fact, the owner had no trouble whatsoever on this account until he halted to change cars at a small junction point some distance outside of London. As he stood on the platform waiting, the Irish station man came up to him.

"Hev ye got a ticket for that?" he asked, pointing to the tortoise, which lay on its back waving its feet in the air.

"Certainly not!" the Englishman said. "And I don't mean to have one, my good fellow. I have come all the way from South Africa with that tortoise and I have never had a ticket for it. I have traveled by bullock cart, by tram, by steamer, by train and afoot with that tortoise and I never have paid and I don't mean to pay."

"I'm thinkin' it has to pay, sor," said the functionary, scratching his ear doubtfully, "but I'll be askin' the agent for he has all av thim things in his book of rules."

The Irishman went into the station and presently he came out again. He approached the traveler in an entirely different manner.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said. "Ye are right. I've asked the agent an' he has explained it to me. Dogs must pay, sir, and by the rules dogs is dogs, and cats is dogs, and squirrels in cages is dogs and must pay, but that there animal is an insect and goes free."

§ 282 No Hope for Dixieland

Some twenty-five or thirty years ago an eccentric genius, Joe Mulhatton by name, and by birth a Kentuckian, exercised a vivid imagination in writing accounts for newspaper publications of marvelous discoveries which he claimed to have made in obscure parts of his native state—and mine. He was the prototype of that equally gifted but anonymous genius who lately has made the town of Winsted, Conn., famous all over America by sending out press stories of faunal wonders and natural freaks which are alleged to have occurred in or near this one particular community.

Month after month Mulhatton plied his unique calling while his audience grew. He found a cavern in the Knobs that was larger than Mammoth Cave and filled with huge mountains of solid ice; a meteorite that was bigger than any court-house in the state and all ablaze with rare and previously unclassified jewels; a breed of tree-climbing fish which had fins with claws on them. Always he gave complete details and, curious though it may seem, there were a great many persons in back districts who accepted his yarns as gospel truth.

One day he burst into print with the tale of a planter on Paint Lick who had taught six pet monkeys to pick the worms off growing tobacco. At that time an interesting character, "Bully" Mason, kept a hotel and saloon in the town of Lancaster in the lower edge of the Blue Grass country. "Bully" was an unreconstructed ex-Confederate, and so credulous that he believed everything he read—even Mulhatton's yarns.

A group of tobacco growers, in for the day from the places on Buckeye Creek and Sugar Creek, took advantage of the old gentleman's trustful nature. Gathering in the barroom they harkened while one of the members read aloud the newest Mulhattonesque fiction and then all joined in a discussion of the latest development in agriculture. It was decided that a fund should be raised with which to import and purchase a carload of monkeys and then to hire experts whose job it would be to educate them for service in the patches against that persistent enemy of the weed-grower—the tobacco worm.

All at once "Bully" broke in.

"Boys," he said, "don't you think of doing no such of a thing. Just about the time you get your monkeys trained right, the dam' Yankees will come down here and set 'em free!"

§ 283 Faunal Currency

There was a Broadway sport who loved to boast. One day he met an impecunious friend and, for the moment forgetting that the latter was a chronic borrower, was moved to do a little bragging.

"I guess I'm a pretty smart fellow," said the fictionist. "Only yesterday I sold a dog for ten thousand dollars."

"You don't mean to say that you got ten thousand dollars for a dog?" asked the other.

"Yep. A rich man took a fancy to the pup and bought him on the spot."

His friend eyed him speculatively.

"Well, I'm glad to hear it," he said, "because I know you'll be ready to do me a favor. My wife's got to go to the hospital tomorrow for an operation. I'm dead broke and the doctor won't touch her until I put up the dough. Now, you're rich, all of a sudden—got all that money. Let me have a couple of hundred, will you?"

For just the fractional part of a minute the romancer was stumped. Then he rallied.

"I'd do it in a minute if I could," he explained; "but I can't."

"But you just told me you sold your dog for ten thousand dollars."

"Yes, but you see that rich man didn't pay me in cash. He gave me two cats at five thousand apiece."

§ 284 A Little Budget of Fish Lies

As a disciple of the late Izaak Walton I resent the imputation that all fishermen are liars. At the same time, though, I must confess

that the burden of proof is against our fraternity, as witness the following symposium of stories, some of them new I think, and one or two of them old.

To begin with, there is the antique anecdote of the intoxicated clubman who halted groggily in front of a wall plaque upon which an enormous tarpon was mounted in the best manner of the taxidermist's art. For a long minute he considered the proportions of the stuffed monster. Then he grunted incredulously:

"Huh!" he exclaimed, "the fellow 'at caught that fish was a dam' liar!"

Then there is the almost equally venerable yarn of the young mother who upon her husband's return from business in the evening met him at the door with a proud and happy smile on her face.

"Oh dearie, we weighed the baby today for the first time. And he weighs forty-seven pounds."

"A six-weeks-old child weighs forty-seven pounds?—impossible! What did you weigh him on?"

"On the scales that you carry in your kit bag to weigh the fish you catch."

Next in order follows the little story of the angler who took a filled flask with him to the bass pond. When he started home in the twilight the flask was empty but he was not.

As he staggered across lots he came upon a scarecrow looming in a cornfield. In the gloaming the apparition was reared upon a framework of timbers, crowned with a battered hat and with the sleeves of a ragged coat thrust through the wooden cross pieces. The returning one blinked at the outstretched arms of the seeming stranger.

"Don't exaggerate," he said sternly. "You know darned well there ain't a fish in this whole country tha's as long as that."

But I hold that the gem of the collection is this one:

Sitting in his cozy New York apartment a confirmed fisherman was describing to his friend the size of the salmon he caught last summer up in Canada.

"How big was it?" asked the hearer.

"Biggest salmon you ever saw," said the sportsman.

"But that doesn't explain much to me," argued his friend. "The only salmon I ever saw was in a can. Measure with your hands to give me an idea."

The host glanced at the walls of the room.

"All right," he said, "but we'll have to go outdoors to do it."

§ 285 Peering into the Future

Credit is due *Punch* for this contribution. However, there are a good many of us who will agree that the point of it has application for our own country.

Punch shows a drawing of a large touring car careening at erratic angles through an English village. A pretty woman, serenely confident, sits at the steering-wheel. She has just run into a cow. She is now about to run over a pig. Geese and children flutter from before the onrushing machine. In the background a yokel is shaking a fist at the flying car. One of its wheels has crushed in a panel of his roadside fence.

In the rear seat of the automobile are two men clinging to each other. Between jolts, one of them, pointing to the lady in front, says to his companion:

"How long did it take your wife to learn to drive?"

"It will be ten years this coming August."

§ 286 The Need for Surgery

A drama league in a New England city was formed for the purposes of taking itself seriously and having a chance to mix with actors; in other words, it was a regulation drama league. To make its mission clearer its members tried to have a serious address, preferably by an actor or an author, at each meeting. For the convenience of stage people these meetings did not begin until midnight.

The society learned that a well-known writer for the stage was to be in town on the night of its next supper and got his written acceptance to attend. On arrival he fell in with some low-lifes and fell hard. He walked into the supper room, convoyed by two companions, a bit groggy.

In due time the president arose and felicitated the company on the treat now in store and then introduced the visiting lion.

The latter surveyed the party before speaking. His complete address was as follows:

"I am told this is an Ibsen gathering. If that is a fact I think it ought to be lanced."

§ 287 How One Thing Does Bring Up Another!

After years of economy Mr. and Mrs. Gray had amassed a neat little fortune and had moved from the farm to a house in Buffalo,

equipped with all the modern conveniences. A little later they made their first trip to view the wonders of Niagara Falls.

Together they stood at the brink and watched the sweep of the waters as they poured over the edge of the cliff and fell with a roar into the chasm below.

"Ain't it wonderful?" asked Mr. Gray. "It's a marvelous sight, ain't it, Martha?"

"Yes," agreed Mrs. Gray in an awed voice. Then a spasm crossed her face and she clutched in horror at her husband's arm.

"But Henry!" she cried. "It's just reminded me—I forgot and left the bathtub running!"

§ 288 "To Him Who Hath——"

A friend of mine from down South avers that this really took place in a courtroom in his home state.

The accused had been found guilty of grand larceny. The evidence given during the trial had gone to show that not only was he guilty of this particular crime but that he had a past record for similar offences.

Now the time had arrived for passing sentence. The judge, who was a person of a benevolent aspect, fixed his mild blue eyes upon the defendant.

"Prisoner at the bar," he said, "you have been convicted of a serious crime. It now devolves upon the court to fix a punishment. If you have anything to say in your own behalf—anything calculated to lead to a mitigation of the penalty—this is your opportunity."

"Well, your Honor," said the criminal, and his manner was quite jaunty, "you probably know how it is yourself. The more a fellow has in this world the more he wants."

"Ah ha," said the judge. "I see. Well, I'm going to give you ten years at hard labor. How much more would you like to have?"

§ 289 Fixing the Blame at Its Source

This little story has one merit, at least. Of my own personal knowledge I can testify that it is true.

A tired business man in New York, coming home after a particularly enervating day, had occasion, or thought he had, to speak sharp words of reproof to his eight-year-old son. He wound up by sending the youngster to bed without any supper.

That night, stealing into the youngster's room to see whether he had fallen asleep, his mother found him wide awake and very scornful of her advances.

"Why, Jackie," she said, "you shouldn't be surly toward me just because your father scolded you. I'm not to blame."

"Yes, you are too!" stated Jackie. "You married the big stiff, and now I got to stand for him!"

§ 290 Above the Collar Line

Some years ago there was a colored stagehand at the Colonial Theatre in Chicago who fancied himself a pugilist. He took lessons in sparring; he practiced shadow boxing until he could lick any shadow that ever lived; he sent his picture to the *Police Gazette*—in short, he did all that an aspiring and ambitious amateur does who hopes in time to become a professional. Presently he announced himself the all-weights champion of the Colonial Theatre.

A musical comedy came along to play the Colonial. Included in its stage crew was a large, brawny person of Swedish antecedents who knew a thing or two about handling his fists.

The negro promptly challenged him for a fight and the stranger accepted the challenge. On the first Saturday night of the troupe's engagement a ring was fitted up back stage and here, after the performance, the bout was staged before an audience consisting of the members of the company, the theatre staff and a few specially invited guests. For a joke, Jay Brady, the manager of the Colonial, acted as manager for the house entry. The leading comedian of the musical show sponsored the cause of the Swede.

The darkey entered the ring resplendent in a gorgeous bathrobe upon which he had squandered his entire week's wages. In response to the applause of his backers he bowed low this way and that, then sank back in his corner in the approved attitude. The stranger climbed through the ropes and hunched on a stool as though unstirred by the excitement of the moment and the importance of the issue.

The referee called time. The two men advanced to the center of the ring. The darky led, feinted, tapped out daintily and deftly for an opening and then swung. The Swede started a haymaker from his knees. His padded fist whizzed upward through the air and as the darkey ducked, it landed on the side of his head with a terrific thump.

The negro landed upon his back half way through the ropes. Even in this sudden and unforeseen catastrophe though, he did not lose his wits.

"Mister Brady!" he yelled, "claim a foul—claim a foul! Dat man hit me a deliberit brain blow!"

§ 291 Reserved for Private Use

In certain parts of the South everybody eats dinner at midday and then takes a nap. Business is practically suspended for a couple of hours. Especially is this true of the summer season.

A Northern traveling man in a small town not far from where I was born and reared needed a lead pencil. Nobody around the little hotel seemed to have one to spare. The time was just after midday and the weather was sultry. He walked down the deserted main street until he came to a general store. A gentleman in his shirt-sleeves, evidently the proprietor, was tilted back in a chair against the front door, taking a nap.

The stranger shook him by the shoulder, at first gently, then forcibly. The sleeper broke a snore short off and opened one heavy eye.

"Well?" he said, drowsily.

"I want to buy a lead pencil," said the traveling man, "a good five-cent lead pencil."

"Got no lead pencils," murmured the proprietor thickly, as his eyes closed again.

"Why, I can see a whole showcase full of them right behind you," protested the traveler.

The proprietor started to rise. Then inspiration came to him.

"Oh, them?" he said, brightly. "Them ain't for sale!" and went right back to sleep.

§ 292 A Tribute Indeed

A man I know told me that one evening he got on an "L" train in Chicago to go to his home in the suburbs. In one of the lengthwise seats near him sat three negroes—a big, wide darkey in the center, with a little, slender darkey on each side of him. The big negro was looking for trouble; that much was plain.

Every time the guard, who was a little German, opened the door to call a station the big darkey would mimic him, and then the other darkies would laugh admiringly. The pestered guard finally protested, whereupon the big darkey threatened him.

"Go on, you Dutchman!" he said. "Ef you sasses me I'll hit you jest oncet, an' knock you so high in the air you'll starve to death comin' down."

"He'll do it, too," said one of the little negroes.

"He will 'at!" assented the other. "Ef he say he'll do it, he shore will!"

Just then the door flew open and in came the German, accompanied by another guard, nearly seven feet high. The German pointed out the disturber, and the giant, without a word, grabbed him by the collar, jerked him out of his place like a tooth out of a socket, cuffed him first on one side of the head and then on the other, dragged him on the platform and pitched him bodily over the gate upon the platform of a station from which the train was just moving. Then he reopened the door and gave the friends of the late departed a hard and threatening look. But they were staring straight ahead of them, their eyes blinking and their faces indicative of a great mental concentration.

For a long minute there was silence. Then, as if moved by the same set of strings, the heads of the two little darkies turned gently, inch by inch, until each looked into the other's face across the gap where their friend had been sitting. One of them sighed musingly.

"Dat suttinly wuz a strong man!" was all he said.

§ 293 A Mistake in Identity

In the town where I was reared there was a combination barroom and lunch room for colored only, known as the Bleeding Heart Saloon. It stood at the foot of a street near the head of the wharf and was a favorite resort for river darkies. Among its regular patrons was a brawny individual, six feet, four inches long and correspondingly broad, who answered to the pet name of Red Hoss. Red Hoss posed as a bad man. He let on, as the phrase runs, that he was the undertaker's best friend. To be sure there was no record that he actually had ever destroyed any one, but he frequently promised to do so, and was rated as dangerous by the resident colored populace.

One night the Cincinnati and New Orleans packet on her way south landed at our town. Among her deck passengers was a small yellow man, a professional prize fighter from up North. On the journey down the river he had introduced his own private set of educated ivories into the crap game among the roustabouts, with the result that he now had all their money in his possession.

Dapper, trim and slim, he climbed the wharf and entered the Bleeding Heart and called for a jolt of sloe gin. He was in the act of paying for the drink with the top film of a delectably fat roll of green bills when the swinging doors were thrust violently asunder and in stalked Red Hoss, slightly intoxicated and therefore doubly

belligerent. His lowering, bloodshot eye swept the interior, then focused with a greedy stare upon what the slender stranger held in his hand.

Lurching slightly, he swaggered up to the bar and gripped a huge soiled paw on the lapel of the little yellow man's coat.

"Say lissen, pusson," he stated. "You better turn dat bundle of sof' money over to me, an' 'en I'll give you back whut part of it I think you should have fur yo'se'f."

"Who is you, may I ast?" inquired the visiting nobleman in gentle accents.

"You better ast!" growled Red Hoss. "Finding out who I is meks yo' chances fur livin' longer all de brighter ef you aims to stay round dese parts. You asts me who I is, huh? Well, I'se goin' tell you. I'se de new town bully, tha's who! Yas, suh; I'se de official bully of dis town an' w'en a strange nigger hits yere he mos' gin'elly hands me over whut spare change he's got an' tha's his life insho'ence. So——"

He did not finish the sentence. Stupefaction and rage tied his tongue temporarily as the audacious stripling with a jaunty gesture brushed free of the detaining clutch and turned to the barkeeper, saying pleasantly:

"Mist' Barkeeper, 'at shorely wuz very tasty gin. I thinks I'll tek me one mo' slug outen de same bottle, ef you please."

Red Hoss recovered his faculties. With a berserker bellow he swung with a huge fist for the little man's jaw. The jaw was not there when the fist whizzed past. The pugilist ducked, and came up expertly with a short-arm jab which landed exactly on the point of Red Hoss's chin. There was a jar as a large inert body struck the floor.

Three minutes later Red Hoss slowly and dizzily roused himself. Some Good Samaritan had restored him to consciousness by sluicing a bucket of water over him. Dripping and dazed, he sat up, holding his aching head on with both hands. The little man stood at the bar blowing softly upon the knuckles of his right hand and conversing with the barkeeper upon the topics of the day.

"Mister," quavered Red Hoss, "who is you?"

"Me?" said the stranger, "oh, I is merely the pusson you thought you wuz w'en you come in yere."

§ 294 Father's Specialty

In a public school in New York City, attended almost exclusively by foreign-born children, a teacher of one of the lower grades was

endeavoring to compile facts pertaining to the family histories of her young charges for the official records.

To each child she gave a blank to be filled in with the proper answers. One ragged little girl gave lengthy consideration to this sentence:

"State your father's business."

Then in the space provided she wrote the one word:

"Outa."

The teacher, collecting the forms, struck this particular word and puzzled long to make out its meaning.

"Rachel," she said at length, "what does 'outa' mean?"

"It means my papa is outa business," explained the child, "so I writes it down 'Outa.'"

"But doesn't he ever work?" inquired the teacher.

"No, ma'am," said the child sadly; "he don't never work—he strikes!"

§ 295 A Confession from the Victim

At a dinner Mayor Hylan, of New York, was reminded immediately upon getting on his feet, of a story.

"I find myself a trifle nervous at being called upon," began His Honor. "I wasn't expecting that I should be asked to address you. My nervousness makes me think of the bashful young man who had just married a somewhat masterful and entirely self-possessed young woman. There was a wedding supper following the ceremony. The couple sat at the head of the table receiving the congratulations of their friends. Several of the guests offered toasts. Finally the presumably happy bridegroom was invited to say a few words. He shook his head.

"'Oh, get up,' somebody urged him. 'Get up and tell us how it feels to be married. Tell us how you came to be engaged, in the first place—how you proposed and what you said to her and what she said to you, and all!'

"Still the young man remained glued fast to his chair. His wife whispered in his red and burning ear:

"'George, you must say something to them—you really must. I insist on it.'

"George hesitated, fumbled with his hands, glanced about him for some avenue of escape but found none, and finally, rising awkwardly, he placed one quivering hand upon the shoulder of his bride and blurted out:

"'This thing has been imposed on me!'"

§ 296 A Stickler for the Code

A survivor of Mosby's Cavalry told me this one, years ago, as illustrative of the German's love for regularity and orderly routine in all the affairs of life.

It would seem that a Bavarian immigrant joined a Union regiment and in the third year of the War was sent to Virginia. One night he imbibed too heavily of strong drink and fell asleep in a corn crib. When he awakened he discovered that during the night a negro camp follower had stolen his uniform, leaving behind a ragged civilian outfit. The German clothed himself in these tatters and set out to find his command.

Presently another and an even more disagreeable circumstance than the theft of his wardrobe impressed itself upon him. By certain signs he was made aware that the Federal forces had withdrawn from their old positions and the enemy had advanced so that he was now inside the foe's lines.

As he limped toward the rear hoping to overtake the retreating force, a squad of ragged gray troopers came whirling out of a thicket and surrounded him. Quite frankly he told them who and what he was, and they made a prisoner out of him.

Presently his captors halted him where a tree limb stretched across the road, and one of the Southerners, unlooping a plow line from his saddle-bow, proceeded to fashion a slip-noose in one end of it. The captive inquired of the lieutenant in command what the purpose of all this might be.

"Why," said the lieutenant, "we're going to treat you as we would any Yank caught inside of our lines in disguise. Under the laws of war we're going to hang you as a spy."

"Vell," said the German, "votefer is der rule!"

§ 297 A Tribute to Marksmanship

There was a tailor in a town where I spent a part of my youth, who was probably the skinniest tailor south of Mason and Dixon's Line. Indeed, I am inclined to believe that, among tailors, he held the skinny championship of the entire United States. In profile he suggested a pair of callipers. There wasn't a spare ounce on him.

On an autumnal evening he was one of several who went coon-hunting in the woods. As the party was returning and had reached the edge of the town, one youth hauled out of his pocket a newly pur-

chased revolver which he thought was unloaded. He snapped it and it behaved as unloaded revolvers usually do under such circumstances. The bullet entered the thigh of the attenuated tailor.

While several of the group sought to make the wounded man comfortable at the roadside, two others hurried off for medical assistance. The nearest physician was an elderly person of full habits and a gruff fashion of speech who lived in the outskirts, perhaps a quarter of a mile from the spot where the accident had occurred. He had retired two hours earlier, after a session with a bottle of prime Bourbon, and was now sound asleep.

Badly excited and very much out of breath, the two coon-hunters reached his residence. After repeatedly knocking at the front door they heard the sound of an upper window being raised and a somewhat thickened voice demanded to know what was wanted at that hour of the night.

"Come on down right away, please, Doc," called back one of the pair. "You're needed."

"Waz mazzer?" he answered.

"Wade Hoyt's been shot down the road here a little piece."

"Wade Hoyt, huh? Who shot 'im?"

"Bill Wilgus."

"Where'd he shoot 'im?"

"In the upper part of the leg."

"Damn good shootin'," said the old doctor as he closed the window and went back to bed.

§ 298 Settled by an Authority

In a rural district in Indiana is a general practitioner of medicine who covers up a wide and comprehensive range of ignorance under an impressive front. Among the natives he passes for a veritable fount of wisdom.

One evening he walked into a country store and the store-keeper, addressing the congregated loafers about the stove, said:

"Now we can find out about it." He turned to the newcomer.

"Say, Doc," he said, "there's a question come up that we want you to settle. I been readin' in the paper here about this here new bovine virus that them foreign doctors is usin' now. Just what is bovine virus, anyhow?"

The oracle scarcely hesitated.

"Bovine virus," he said, in his most oratorical manner, "derives its name from the man that discovered it—the eminent French scientist, Dr. George W. Bovine."

"There now," said the store-keeper facing the audience, "I told you the Doc would know if anybody did."

§ 299 The Limit and Then Some

It was before my day, but in our country they still talk about a convention which was held one time to select a nominee for railroad commissioner of our district. Ballot after ballot the vote stood a tie between the candidate from the upper end of the district and the candidate from our end of the state, which was the extreme southwestern end. It was agreed early in the proceedings that no proxies might be given, but that every delegate must vote by name for himself. The consequence was that no delegate could go back home and leave a friend behind to cast his vote for him. They balloted without result for two days and two nights and still the deadlock lasted. Finally, on the third day at noon, the convention took a recess until four P.M.

The backers of the lower state candidate took advantage of the recess to hold a caucus and discuss ways and means for circumventing the enemy, if so be any such ways and means might be devised. In the midst of the caucus there rose up a gentleman and his name was Stonewall Jackson Bugg, but he was better known as Stony Bugg. Stony had an inspiration. He explained that he had got on quite friendly terms with an opposing delegate from up the state, a little, sickly-looking, cross-eyed man. It seemed that they had exchanged conversation and fine-cut chewing tobacco, and had found that their tastes in thoroughbred horses ran in the same channel, so now there was a bond between them.

Mr. Bugg's idea was this: He would go straightway and seek out the little cross-eyed man and would lure him off to some out-of-the-way grocery—they called them groceries in those days—and there, under cover of friendship, treacherously would ply his intended victim with strong waters until the latter was in a state of helplessness.

"Boys," said he, "this yere'll be the way of it: I'll get him so drunk he can't remember his own name. I'll get him so drunk he can't hit the ground with his hat. I'll fill him so full of them sweetenin' drams he won't be able to talk, walk, or stand up. And then I'll stow him away in a corner somewhere to sleep it off and I'll leave him there and I'll be back at the hall in plenty of time to cast my vote and bust up this here tie. All you boys got to do is just make up a purse to buy the licker with and I'll do the rest."

Knowing Stony's magnificent capacity, his hearers gave loud cheers. By subscription a sum deemed to be amply sufficient for accomplishing the intended stratagem was immediately raised. Stony, pouching the contributions, hurried forth upon his mission.

Four o'clock came and the convention re-convened, Stony and his prey being still missing. The chairman, ordering the next ballot, bade the secretary to call the roll, not by county but by calling each separate delegate of each county by name, as was the rule. Alphabetically, the county from which the up-state delegate came was reached before the county from which Mr. Bugg came.

Just as the secretary had progressed as far as this up-state county, the door of the convention building opened and the little cross-eyed man appeared—alone. He swayed like an aspen but he still had powers of locomotion. He wabbled up the hall. He came to where a shadow lay across the aisle. He stopped and rolled up his trousers legs and waded through it and fell into his own seat just in time to answer to his name and to cast the vote which gave the nomination to his candidate by a plurality of one, leaving the opposition utterly stunned and flabbergasted.

The chairman had just declared the result amid the applause of the victorious faction, when again the door swung open and a limp heap, attired in tousled garments, fell in and lay upon the floor where it had fallen, and was recognized as Stonewall Jackson Bugg. Some subtle homing instinct, working behind the alcoholic veil, mechanically and automatically had directed his footsteps back to the place which he had been carrying in his mind just before his mind left him. Friends ran to him and raised his head. He breathed heavily but otherwise gave no signs of conscious life. They shook him, they beat him upon the chest, they called to him by his own name and by other names.

"Stony," they cried. "Stony, listen! Whyn't you get him drunk?"

With difficulty he lifted one drowsy eyelid. With yet greater difficulty he focused a wabbly and uncertain eye upon the distressed countenances of those who bent over him.

"Whish?" he inquired thickly.

"Whyn't you get that feller drunk like you promised?"

He half freed himself from the supporting arms. His chest heaved, his voice gurgled in his throat.

"Drunk?" he echoed blankly. Then proudly, as recollection came back to him: "Huh, boysh, I got that lil' raskil so dad-blame drunk I couldn't see 'im!"

§ 300 One for Nature Lovers

The official liar of the Ozarks was entertaining a credulous Easterner with tales of the natural and zoological marvels to be found in the adjacent mountains.

He spoke convincingly of the habits of the hydrophobia skunk. From the depths of his boundless imagination he conjured up a vivid description of the giant panther of Bald Peak which lured its victims to its den by uttering cries suggestive of a lost child's wails. He told of the albino buck deer that had been hunted for years and still eluded the most skillful trackers and the smartest hound dogs and the keenest marksmen. Inevitably the gifted fictionist at length worked his way through the fauna until he reached the subject of snakes.

"Speakin' of snakes," he said, "I reckin there's more snakes and wuss snakes within ten miles of here than there is anywhere else on earth."

"What sort of snakes are they?" asked the greenhorn, his eyes bulging and his ears cocked.

"All sorts—hoop snakes, glass snakes, milk snakes, copperheads, spreadin' adders, highland moccasins, cotton-mouths, bull snakes, whip snakes."

"Any rattlers?"

"Any rattlers? Say, Mister, the biggest rattlers and the most pizenous ones in the whole world is right here."

"Ever been bitten yourself?"

"Me? No, sir. If I ever had a' been I wouldn't be settin' here talkin' to you now. I'd be in the graveyard. But I had one mighty close call here the other day—or rather, my train of mules did."

"How did it happen?"

"Well, sir, I was drivin' up through the knobs on my way home from town. All of a sudden right in the middle of the road I seen an old bull-rattler as big around through the body as my leg at the thigh. He was coiled up ready to sting with all his rattles goin'! I was right on him before I seen him and just as I did see him he up and struck.

"But my mules are smart. They both shied off in different directions so inst'id of hittin' either one of them he set his fangs in the hickory wagon-tongue. It was lucky I had an ax along with me."

"To kill the snake with, I suppose."

"No, he got away. Soon as he'd struck he darted off into the bushes. But by the time I could grab the ax and jump down, the

wagon-tongue had started to swell up and already had turned as black as your hat. I chopped it off just in time to save the wagon."

§ 301 Fed Up on Thrills

A man who has a severe crick in his neck—a crick so very severe that he cannot raise his head or look sidewise—accompanies a friend to where an aëronaut is to give an exhibition.

The pair station themselves on the edge of the crowd. All at once a tremendous shout arises.

"What's that?" inquires the sufferer, his gaze firmly fixed on the earth at his feet.

"The flier has just started up. Gee, he knows how to handle that machine of his!"

The applause increased in volume.

"What's that for?" asks the wry-necked man.

"Oh, he's doing tail spins, nose dives, all sorts of fancy stunts. He's great—the best you ever saw!"

Suddenly there is a great cry of horror from the multitude.

"What are they yelling about now?" inquires the victim of the crick.

"The plane has caught fire!" exclaims his companion. "It's bursting into flames! The flier is jumping from his aëroplane in a parachute! He's cut loose! He's dropping like a rocket! The parachute is opening out—he'll be saved! No, by heavens, the parachute is splitting into pieces! He'll be killed! He's coming down faster and faster! He's going to strike right on top of Smith's greenhouse! No! He's all right! He's managed to twist himself in the air and he's lit right on top of a haystack alongside the greenhouses! He's not hurt—he's saved! Hurrah! Hurrah! Good boy!"

"What's going on now?"

"The crowd is surrounding him! They're riding him on their shoulders!"

"Is that so?" says the sufferer; "well, that being the case, we might as well be starting on home. I've seen enough for one day."

§ 302 A Husband's Proper Role

A household disturbance is being threshed out in the Court of Domestic Relations. The chief witness and presumably the only disinterested one is a neighbor of the warring pair.

This gentleman has just finished giving his testimony. The attorney for the lady in the case, who is also the complainant, takes him in hand for cross-examination.

"Now then, Mr. Jones," says the counsel very sharply, "please pay close attention to my questions and make direct answers. You claim you overheard the quarrel between this couple?"

"Yes, sir."

"It went on for some time, eh?"

"It certainly did. It went on for hours."

"It was a very violent quarrel, you allege?"

"It was."

"Well then, tell the court, if you truthfully can, what the husband seemed to be doing?"

"He seemed to be doing the listening."

§ 303 In No Great Hurry About It

Ray Richardson, from Louisville, was selling automobiles in New Orleans some time ago. One afternoon an old-fashioned negro preacher from one of the black parishes of Louisiana appeared at the showroom as a prospective purchaser of a second-hand car. He explained that the members of his congregation wished to provide him with a machine and had raised a fund for that purpose.

The negotiations consumed several days. The old man was unable to decide which one of two available cars he wanted. As a result of his daily visits to the establishment Richardson came to know him very well. The preacher exhibited a homely philosophy of his own. His propensity for larding his remarks with Scriptural quotations also made him a source of constant delight.

Eventually he made his selection and took his car away. Within a week he brought it back, complaining that the wiring was defective and that one headlight would not burn. While a mechanic was repairing these faults the manager of the company drove a car close up behind the preacher and, when within a few feet of him, sounded a terrific blast on his horn. For all his age, the preached jumped at least ten feet, from a standing start. He landed in a far corner, his eyes popping out of his head and his complexion faded to the color of wet wood ashes.

"Look here, Elder," said Richardson, "I'm afraid you're a fake. Here you go about calling yourself a Christian and professing yourself to be certain of salvation, and yet it seems you're just as much

afraid of death as any of us sinners are. Is it possible that you have any doubts about Heaven being your home?"

"Naw suh," said the old man. "Heaven is suttinly my home; but Mist' Richardson, jes' at present I ain't what you'd call homesick."

§ 304 Recalling an Old Acquaintance

Two very small boys ran away from their homes one day in the town where a friend of mine used to spend his summers. The grandfather of one of the truants was a distinguished clergyman of the Episcopal church.

Toward evening the little runaways found themselves lost in a dense woodland several miles from home. The dusk was closing in. They were tired and footsore and homesick and they were beginning to get frightened.

"I 'spect we'd better pray to God," said one of the pair, preparing to kneel.

"No," said his companion, "let me do the praying."

He sank on his knees, clasped his hands and raised his tear-stained face aloft.

"Oh, Lord," he began, "you must know me. I'm Bishop Rogers' grandson."

§ 305 In the Safety Zone

A Maine farmer with a reputation for frugality which was more than local drove up to the general store. He halted his team, dismounted from his wagon, entered, and passed the time of day with those present. This formality concluded, he drifted over to the cooler and drank copiously of the ice-water. One of the resident loafers furnished him with tobacco for his pipe and another provided a match. Then he picked up a handy bucket and went out to water his horses. Returning, he begged a daub of axle grease with which to anoint one of his wheels. This seemed to remind him that a tire was slipping so he asked the proprietor to lend him a hammer for a few minutes. While the obliging storekeeper was searching his stock for a hammer, the visitor made a light but satisfying luncheon of cheese sliced from the cube on the counter, a couple of soda crackers plucked from a handy barrel, and a few segments of dried apple.

After this, apparently, he could think of nothing else. He had

mounted to his seat and was driving away when the storekeeper hailed him:

"Say, Bill," he called out, "ef you should find, later in the day, that you've lost your purse, remember you didn't have it out while you was here!"

§ 306 An Error in the Code

Colonel Starbuck of Virginia was about to deliver his first after-dinner speech. He was distinguished in many regards—for one, his ability to drink his whiskey straight was a thing more than locally famous—but he lacked experience and, as he feared, facility in the art of putting his points over when speaking on his feet before an audience. After he had prepared the manuscript of his remarks and had memorized them, he bethought him of the use of a claque.

So he rang the bell for his body-servant—a venerable person answering to the name of Jim, whose chief function in life was to serve his employer with liquor.

"Jim," said his master, "I've got to deliver a talk tomorrow night before the State Historical Society and I'm a bit nervous over the prospect. Now I want to make sure that my efforts will be properly received. That's where you come in—you've got a good strong voice and an infectious laugh.

"I'm going to take you along with me to the banquet hall. We'll go early—before the others begin to arrive, and I want you to station yourself at the head of the room, behind the window-draperies where you can see me up at the guest table but where you'll be hidden from the rest of the gentlemen. When I am called on to speak you will be ready for your cues.

"For instance, if I come to a pause and nothing happens, I'll just lift up my glass of water as though I meant to take a sip, and that will be a sign for you to start clapping your hands and shouting. Your example will be contagious, I figure—everybody else will then burst into applause. Get the notion?"

"Yas, suh," said Jim.

"Good! But if, on the other hand, I get off a joke or tell a funny story and they don't seem to get the point of it right away, I shall draw my hand across my forehead and then you are to begin laughing at the top of your voice. And the crowd will follow suit—they can't help it. Understand?"

"Kunnel," said Jim, "looks lak to me you got dem signals twisted. You better arrange 'em differ'nt. 'Cause, kunnel, any time I

sees you reachin' out fur water to drink tha's when I'm gwine bust out laffin'!"

§ 307 Anything to Close the Deal

Three strangers called at a Wall Street investor's house on business. They were disappointed to learn that he was in Europe and were reluctant to confide their business to his wife until she made it clear that she knew about his affairs.

Her husband owned quite a chunk of a certain mining stock. Did she think he would be willing to sell at 48? She did not know, but would cable and find out. The answer came promptly: "Sell."

Again she was obliged to cable, her message this time being: "I cannot open the safe."

To which he replied: "Throw in the safe."

§ 308 The Mild Transgression of Father

This one got into vaudeville—a sure sign of its excellence—very soon after it was originated.

A philanthropic gentleman engaged in settlement work asks a small boy some leading questions.

"What does your father do?" he inquires.

"He don't do nothin'," answers the urchin. "He's up at Sing Sing for eight years."

"Oh, I'm so distressed to hear it. What did he do that sent him there?"

"Well, pop was working in a place down town and he got to bringing home samples at night and they found out about it and put him in jail and when they tried him he got eight years."

"I never heard of anything so barbarous!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "To give a man a long sentence in state's prison for carrying away a few samples—why it's incredible! Tell me, what sort of a place was it where your unfortunate father worked?"

"A bank."

§ 309 Not an Intentional Loser Anyhow

In the early days two cowhands were riding back to the home ranch in Arizona. From behind a butte out dashed a war-party of painted Apaches.

If they tarried, the best they might expect was to be killed and scalped. With thought of the torture stake in their minds the two cowboys sank the spurs into the flanks of their ponies and were off, with the Indians in hot pursuit.

The chase was an hour old and still the protection of the bunkhouse was miles away. One of the fugitives presently took note that his partner was losing ground. He sought to stir the other into yet more desperate efforts.

"Come on here, you Bill!" he yelled back over his shoulder. "Come on—you ain't half trying."

Between jolts the beleaguered one made passionate answer:

"I suppose," he said, "I s'pose, you dam' fool, you think I'm tryin' to throw this race!"

§ 310 Merely the Preliminary Work

There was a Tong War on in San Francisco's Chinatown. On both sides there had been numerous fatalities.

One morning, in the midst of hostilities, a mild-looking little Oriental came quietly into the office of a prominent criminal lawyer of the city. He opened negotiations without preamble:

"How much you charge, get Chinaman free for kill another Chinaman dead?"

"Ten thousand dollars," answered the lawyer promptly.

"How much down?"

"Five thousand dollars now—five thousand dollars when I go to court for the trial."

The caller counted out five thousand dollars and put it on the desk, then started out.

"Hey, come back here—where are you going?" cried the attorney.

"I go kill him," said the little yellow man. "Be back bimeby."

§ 311 The Color of Real Sin

The pastor of a thriving colored congregation in Jacksonville was speaking to one of his flock.

"Brother," he said, "I hears very bad reports of your youngest son. That boy doesn't seem to do you much credit."

"Credit?" rejoined his parishioner. "Huh, you puts it mild. Tha's the worst child ever I seen in my whole life. In fact, Elder, strick'ly between ourse'fs, we regards him ez de w'ite sheep of de family!"

§ 312 Naming the Enemy

Before a mixed audience a scientist was lecturing on man's eternal conflict with nature.

"Always," he stated, "hostile forces combat the efforts of human beings to wrest a livelihood from the soil. Since the dawn of time that war has gone on. To the twilight of this world's existence it will continue to go on.

"Consider, my friends, the situation on our own fair land: We plant wheat and the black smut gets it. In the Southland we seek to produce cotton and the boll weevil attacks the crop. The San Jose scale destroys the product of the fruit growers of the Far West. The locust devours the hay of New England. So it goes. And our corn is preyed on by—by——" he paused in embarrassment. "I'm afraid, for the moment, I have forgotten the name. Perhaps someone present can tell us what it is that preys on our corn?"

From a rear seat came a loud clear voice:

"The chiropodist!"

§ 313 The Real Object of the Visit

There is a scholarly musician in one of our larger cities who hates nearly all modern compositions and especially does he hate jazz. Ragtime formerly was his pet aversion but lately he has transferred his main dislike to the jazzy stuff. The mere mention of it gives him excruciating agony.

It is stated that one evening he was on his way across town to attend a symphony concert. He had plenty of time to spare and he rather idled along. He came to an apartment house, on the top floor of which lived a professional friend who shared with him these prejudices against the prevalent melodies of the day. He observed that smoke was pouring from a basement window and just then the janitor ran out of the areaway to call the fire engines.

The passer-by dashed upstairs—it was not an elevator apartment—to give the alarm to his associate. It was apparent that none of the tenants in the house had been notified of the peril, for, as he hurried past a door on the fifth floor the strains of a phonograph rendering one of Paul Whiteman's latest floated out into the hallway.

When he reached the next landing he found his friend standing at the threshold of his flat.

"Do you hear that?" demanded the resident, pointing downward with a finger which quivered.

"Do I hear it?" repeated the newcomer, fairly frothing at the mouth. "Does a man hear anything else these degenerate times?"

Together they passed into the apartment, took seats together in the front room and proceeded, by turns, to curse all jazz whatsoever. A congenial ten minutes passed.

Then, down below, the host heard engine gongs and shouting. He stepped to a window and looked forth into the night.

"Great heavens!" he cried out. "This building is on fire!"

"Yes," said the visitor, "since you mention it, I remember now that's what I came up here to tell you!"

§ 314 Party Loyalty

The late Shelby Cullom, United States Senator from Illinois for so many years, had the reputation—and deserved it—of being conservative in speech and action. Mainly he let others do the talking while he listened and took mental notes and then, when he did speak, generally he said something worth listening to.

One time he was in conference with a group of Republican leaders and sub-leaders at Washington. A campaign was impending and political ways and means were being canvassed. The name of a certain candidate on the party ticket was brought up, and regarding this person's mentality one of the group was moved to speak freely and with bitterness.

"Say," snorted the critic, "that fellow is nothing but a poor fish! I don't see how we can be expected to support him at the election."

He looked toward Senator Cullom, as the leader, for confirmation of this offhand diagnosis.

The Senator stared thoughtfully into space, meanwhile tugging at his chin.

"A poor fish, no doubt," he said; "but still he's our fish."

§ 315 The Interchangeable Name

I was out in Minnesota on a fishing trip. At a home in St. Paul we were entertained by a most charming lady.

In the living-room where we sat after dinner I was struck by a photograph, framed in silver and displayed upon the mantel, of an exceedingly handsome and well-set-up boy in his early 'teens.

I inquired who the original of the picture might be.

"That," explained the matron, "is our son—our only child. He's off at camp for the summer."

"What is his name?" I asked.

"I'll spell it for you," said our hostess. "It's A-e-r-n."

"Rather unusual," I said. "How do you pronounce it?"

"That all depends," said the lady. "You see, ours was what they call a mixed marriage. As you may have guessed, I am Jewish. My parents were orthodox Jews, while my husband, as you know, is of pure Irish descent. Both of us are proud of the races to which we belong. When our son was born each of us was naturally anxious that he should bear a name which would be agreeable to the other and yet at the same time would have a familiar and affectionate sound in the ears of all concerned. So after a number of conferences we reached a compromise. My husband calls him 'Erin' and I call him 'Aaron.'"

§ 316 A Tribute to a Conversationalist

A native Tennesseean who had spent several years in New York went back to his old home on a visit. Upon the first evening of his arrival the son of an old negro retainer of the family called to pay his respects to the returned prodigal.

"Sam," said the white gentleman, "I remember your father with affectionate regards. What's the reason he hasn't come around to see me?"

"Mouty good reason, boss," said Sam. "Pappy he up an' died on us yere about six months ago."

"Well, I certainly am distressed to hear it," said the visitor. "Your father was a good citizen and he was bright, even if he had no education, and he had a philosophy that was all his own."

"Yas, suh, dat he did," agreed the pleased Sam. "His mind was clear right up to de end."

"Well, tell me what his last words were? I'll bet they were worth hearing."

"Pappy didn't have no last words."

"Why not? Wasn't he conscious?"

"Yas, suh."

"Well, then, why didn't he have any last words?"

"Mammy wuz wid him."

§ 317 Life in the Golden West

As has been pointed out before, it is regarded as exceedingly bad form on the part of an earthquake should it be so ill-advised as to

occur in the vicinity of any real estate development along the Pacific Coast. Nevertheless, and either through ignorance or deliberate carelessness, earthquakes do, from time to time, occur. As a general proposition, they do no great damage, but they are annoying, and often newcomers to California get a trifle nervous over these tremors. As a result it is sometimes difficult to secure competent domestic help. In some towns almost any general housekeeper is given a hearty welcome in almost any home and such shortcomings as she may manifest are generally condoned.

They tell of a young matron who lived in one of these towns. She hadn't been living there very long. She had heard about earthquakes but she had never experienced one. Still, she had other troubles. Her one servant meant well, no doubt, but had a destructive way about her.

One afternoon the lady was taking a nap. Suddenly she awakened. The house was filled with clamor. Downstairs she could hear chinaware smashing and cooking utensils banging about with a loud metallic clanging; then, as the kitchen ceiling fell, there was a tremendous thud.

But the lady was not in the least frightened. She did not think of earthquakes. She merely associated the disturbance with the day's routine. She arose, sighed deeply, went to the head of the back stairs and in a resigned and patient voice called down:

"Well, Lizzie, what are you doing now?"

§ 318 A Master of Dead Tongues

Jack Ryan, of St. Louis, is, to my way of thinking, the best teller of Irish stories on or off the stage. He is responsible for this contribution.

Jack describes the meeting between Mr. McKenna and Mr. O'Shea. For years they had been separated. Now, these childhood friends, in their middle-age, were reunited. O'Shea had come on business to the town where McKenna lived and stopped over to pay him a visit.

After the honors had been done, Mr. McKenna produced his son, Francis Xavier McKenna, aged twelve.

The guest felt that it was a duty incumbent upon him to make much of that youngster.

"A fine bye," he exclaimed, admiringly, "and smart-lookin'. Is he good at his books, now?"

"He is," proclaimed the proud father. "He's very good at all his books but he's fine at langwidges. Me son, say 'horse' in algebra fer Mr. O'Shea."

§ 319 Pity for the Unskilled

The minstrel parade went swinging along where two husky individuals were assaulting the soil beneath the asphalt with picks, three feet below the surface and over on a side of the street. For the sake of novelty, let us respectively refer to these two industrials as Pat and Mike. They straightened their backs to watch the pageant pass.

Behind the band in the front file were the two proprietors and two highly paid end-men. Then trailed a large and assorted company, all in showy parade costumes.

Said Patrick to Michael after the music had died away and they had laboriously resumed work:

"'Twas a fine body of men."

"It was," commented his friend, "an' it's a pity that prob'ly not one av thim has a thrade."

§ 320 One for the Summer Season

This one is suitable for hot weather consumption, having to do as it does, with the season when mulberries ripen.

Little Harold, aged seven, enters the house of his parents, wearing upon his face an expression betokening uneasiness. He has been properly reared, and despite his tender years he uses correct and careful language. This is his first summer in the country.

"Mother," he says, "I want to ask you a question."

"What about, my son?"

"About mulberries."

"Well, what about mulberries? Have you been eating mulberries?"

"Yes, ma'am; at least I think so."

"You think so? Don't you know?"

"That brings up the question I wanted to ask you. Mother, are mulberries little round black things that have six legs apiece and crawl around on the ground under the mulberry trees?"

"Why, no, indeed!"

"Then, Mother," says Harold, "I feel that I have made a great mistake!"

§ 321 The Crowning Blow

This story relates to actors. It is a very old story. A repertoire company had reached the limit of its endurance. One bad engage-

ment had followed another. The manager was down to his last two-dollar bill. The troupe, practically stranded in a remote corner of Arkansas, was about to disband, when a ray of hope shot through the clouds of despair which encompassed its members. Word arrived that a theatre had just been completed in an adjoining town. There had been advance sale up to capacity for the opening night. But at the last moment the attraction booked for the gala occasion had failed to appear and now the welcome news from the local manager was that if the embarrassed outfit could get across the country in time, it might give the performance and share in the guaranteed profits.

By superhuman efforts, which included the hocking of his watch and his fur-trimmed overcoat, the manager raised funds to provide railroad fares for his aggregation to a junction five miles from the other town. Disembarking from the train, the jubilant Thespians climbed into a waiting omnibus and started along the winding dirt road. In the front seat, alongside the driver, rode the manager.

"Beautiful country you have here," he said. "All nature seems glad. Just look yonder, ahead of us, at that glorious red sunset. I don't think I ever saw a more magnificent sunset."

"That there ain't no sunset, Mister," stated the native, "that's our new opry house burnin' down."

§ 322 No Back Dates to Catch Up With

As showing how an innate optimism can triumph over apparent ill-fortune, I feel moved to repeat a little story having to do with a light-hearted negro who in a moment of pique brained an acquaintance with a hatchet and after spending several seemingly contented months in jail was brought forth for trial. The jury promptly returned a verdict of guilty of murder and the judge sentenced the smiling defendant to life imprisonment. As the hand-cuffed prisoner was being led across the courthouse yard on his way back to jail, a friend hailed him:

"Hey, Jim, how long is you got to serve?"

"Oh, jest frum now on," answered Jim, cheerily.

§ 323 The Fresh Young Man

The young woman was exceedingly fair to look upon. She entered the department store and went to the section devoted to photo-

graphic supplies where she explained to an affable salesman that she was thinking of investing in a camera.

"This looks like a very nice one," she said, picking up a small machine. "I don't know much about cameras but I do like the appearance of this one. What is it called?"

"That's the Belvedere," said the clerk politely.

There ensued a chilly silence. Then the young woman drew herself coldly erect, fixed him with a frigid stare and asked again:

"Er—and can you recommend the Belva?"

§ 324 A Born Diplomat

A few months ago the story which I am now about to tell was freely circulated in certain circles where whimsical yarns are appreciated. So far as I know, though, it never found its way into print. It is high time this error of omission was rectified.

In a Southern city a colored youth applied at a leading hotel for a job as bell-boy. There was a vacancy in the bell-hopping staff and the applicant, it seemed, had had experience in similar work at other hotels. The manager, liking the boy's looks, turned him over to the bell-captain, who also was colored, for final examination before assigning him to duty.

"De main question," began the inquisitor, "is whether you is got politeness. We insists yere 'at all our force must be respeckful an' polite."

"Huh!" said the candidate, "I not only is got politeness, I lakwise also is got tact."

"Whut's de diff'unce 'tween politeness and tact?" asked the bell captain.

"A big diff'unce," said the new hand. "Listen: Lemme give you a 'lustration to prove it. De last job I had over yere at de Palace Hotel, de clerk calls me one day an' he tells me to tek a armload of fresh towels up to Number 970. So I teks de towels on my arm an' goes up an' knocks at Number 970. Dey ain't no answer. So I turns de knob and finds de do' ain't locked an' I walks in. Dey ain't nobody in sight inside, so I figgers dat de guest, whoever 'twuz, w'ich wanted de towels is done gone out. So I goes across de room an' opens de bathroom do' an' dere's a strange lady settin' in de bathtub. I say right quick: 'Scuse me, SUH,' an' I backs out.

"Now, sayin' 'Scuse me' wuz politeness, but de 'suh' part—dat wuz tact!"

§ 325 Putting the Stranger in His Place

The thing happened during the holding of the 1920 Democratic National Convention in San Francisco. In a lull in the proceedings an Eastern delegate, a rather pompous and self-sufficient person, took a stroll in the general direction of where he assumed the shore line to be. He walked a considerable distance without finding it.

A ragged youngster trudged past him.

"Say, my lad," said the visitor, patronizingly, "how far is it to the ocean?"

The youngster eyed him calmly?"

"Which ocean?" he asked.

§ 326 Stripped Right Down

In a town near Boston where nearly all the residents were persons of means there was a smart country club. Here on Saturday nights whole families gathered, the boys, girls and the younger married couples to dance and the elder statesmen to play a quaint old Persian game called draw-poker.

On a certain March evening the head of a household found himself far in the rear when time came for his family to go. He sent them off in the automobile and as it seemed a problem as to how long it would take him to get even, if at all, he told the chauffeur he would walk home.

When the session was concluded the gamesters found it had been snowing heavily for hours. The principal figure in this episode started off afoot in the slush. He was not happy; he had been the main loser.

Long before he reached his house he was soaked up to the knees. On arrival his first act was to remove his shoes and trousers. With his trousers left on a downstairs radiator to dry he mounted the stairs and passed through the lighted hallway to his chamber. This took him past the room occupied by his favorite daughter. She had left the door open and could readily see out, although her father could not see in, and thought her asleep anyway.

Out of the dark to him came these words:

"Well, old scout, I see they finally got your pants."

§ 327 Narrowing Down to the Facts

There were two brothers; a truthful brother and a brother who was the most incorrigible and persistent liar in the country. As a

result of the latter's chronic embellishments of facts the whole family was getting a bad reputation.

The truthful brother took him in hand.

"Look here, Bill," he said, "you're disgracing the name. This thing has got to stop. The next time you start in to exaggerate just keep your eye on me. When you begin to go too far I'll give you a hard look and that'll be a signal to you to begin soft-pedaling."

The very next day the two brothers were in the company of a group of their fellow-citizens. The talk drifted to the subject of big city hotels. This was a cue for the liar.

"Speakin' of hotels," he said, "I know a hotel out in Californy that is twenty-two stories high, has a thousand rooms in it, eight dining-rooms, fourteen bowling alleys, twenty-two swimming pools, thirty soda-water fountains, forty-eight billiard halls and—" here he caught a hard look from the good brother—"and is three feet and a half wide."

§ 328 Absolutely No Vacancies

Maybe it is because his name definitely is associated with the poem "Casey at the Bat", but anyhow, DeWolf Hopper specializes in baseball stories. Here is one he told at a banquet not so very long ago:

He said that two semi-professional teams were playing for a county championship. This was to be the deciding game of the match. Naturally, rivalry ran high and so did excitement, and a large crowd gathered. But the individual agreed upon as umpire failed to appear at the hour appointed for beginning. In this emergency the two managers conferred. It was difficult to find an agreeable substitute because practically every able-bodied male present was a violent partisan of one club or the other. But there chanced to be one stranger on hand; presumably he would be unbiased.

The managers approached him. They appealed to his sportsman's instincts to help them out of the predicament. At once he volunteered his services. So delighted was everybody that nobody thought to inquire whether the obliging gentleman had a thorough knowledge of the rules of the game. Besides, he squatted behind the catcher in the approved posture and gave the signal to start.

Almost immediately the side at bat began to hammer at the offerings of the opposing pitcher. The first man up beat out an infield hit, the second man advanced him with a neat bunt. The third player was safe at first on a fumble by the short-stop.

With the bases full and with a renowned slugger of the opposition team coming up, the pitcher lost control altogether. He tried to curve 'em over the plate but one after another they went so wild that the catcher could barely slap them down.

"One ball!" chanted the umpire.

"Two balls!"

"Three balls!"

"Four balls—you're out!"

"What!" shouted the outraged batsman. "What's the reason I'm out?"

The umpire waved his arm toward the three sacks each marked by a hovering runner.

"You just naturally have to be out," he explained. "Don't you see I ain't got no place to put you?"

§ 329 Follow My Leader

It is only the very rich who can afford, these days, to dictate to their domestic staffs. Most of us are willing enough to do what the servants want us to do, provided only they'll stay on a little while longer.

But with the wealthier classes its different. As witness this:

Mrs. Midas was seated in her drawing-room. She touched the bell for the new butler. A pompous individual entered.

"You rang, Madam?" he inquired.

"I did, Meadows," said his mistress. "The second maid is sick so I wish you this afternoon to take Fifi out for a two-hour walk."

Fifi, it is almost unnecessary to state, was a dog.

The butler drew himself up to his full height.

"But, Madam," he said, "I am practically a stranger to Fifi. I am afraid Fifi will not follow me."

"Then, Meadows, you must follow Fifi."

§ 330 From the Book of Proverbs

In that part of St. Louis known as "Kerry Patch" there lived, in the old days, a fine old Irishman who was fond of larding his conversation with proverbs. He adorned every moral and pointed every tale with a wise saw or a quoted saying. He had a son, a strapping youth. It is possible that such a constant diet of proverbs got upon the youngster's nerves. At any rate he up and ran away.

He got a job with a circus, and, in the capacity of a stable hand, traveled for two years up and down the country. Finally, one day, the truant came limping home. He was in rags. His toes peeped from the tips of his broken brogans. He limped up to the front door of the parental establishment and rapped timidly on the panels.

It was his sire who answered the knock. At a glance, the old man took in the tatters, the unshaven face, and the decrepit footgear of his returned offspring.

"Be aff wid ye!" he shouted. "And niver dare to darken me t'reshold again. How often have I tould ye that the rolling stone gathers no moss? Git the hell out o' here!"

The prodigal slunk away. Two more years passed before he ventured back once more to the homestead. But now he came in gladsome raiment. He had established connections with a troupe of card-sharks that traveled with the show. He wore a high hat and patent leather shoes and a fur-collared overcoat. There was a gorgeous diamond in his bosom and one gloved hand jauntily switched a heavy walking cane. The very aromas of prosperity enwreathed him.

With conscious assurance of a welcome he flung open the door and stepped into his father's presence. Nor was he disappointed. With a glad cry the old gentleman sprang forward to embrace him.

"Ah, Dinny, me boy!" he cried out, "what a true sayin' it is that 'tis the ramblin' bee gathers the honey."

§ 331 A Maine State Conservative

I once went camping in Maine. There were eight of us in our party. And we had eight guides.

The eight included an Indian, courtly, gentle and soft-voiced, and three French Canadians, all of them lithe, handsome, nimble chaps; but the remaining four were typical Yankees with the Down-East twang in their voices and the inborn conservatism of the true rural pioneer stock of New England at the back of whatever they said.

I remember a certain speech of one of them. He delivered it between pauses, while he puffed his pipe and pondered his statements, testing each brief sentence for truth before he uttered it.

"Knew a feller once't 'at p'izened hisself eatin' tainted salmon out of one of these here tin cans out of a store," he began. "Leastwise, they said ez haow 'twuz tainted." Pause. "Eatin' it didn't dew him no real good, ez you might say." Pause. "They figured that eatin' it wuz enough, jest by itself, to make him die." Pause.

"Fact is, I don't know but whut he did die." Pause. "I wuz to the *funerel.*"

§ 332 As to Jesse's Intentions

Jesse Burkett, old-time fence buster, is now rounding out a long career in the national game as an assistant to Manager John McGraw. A few years ago, though, he was managing a team in one of the lesser leagues up in New England. His eye had not forgotten its cunning even though his legs were stiffer than they once were; and frequently in an emergency he went in to bat for some member of his outfit who was weak with the stick.

One summer Burkett had a severe falling-out with one of the umpires on the circuit. The umpire bided his time, awaiting a chance to get even. Finally he got it.

The game was almost over; Burkett's team appeared to be hopelessly beaten, no matter what might happen. It would take a miracle to put them where they would have even a remote chance to tie the score. Nevertheless, in the ninth inning, with two men out and only one man on base, Burkett elected to try to make a hit. He beckoned back the player who was approaching the plate, grabbed his favorite length of hickory, and declared himself in.

The umpire, following the custom of announcing the entry of a new batter and the name of the man whom he succeeds, faced the grandstand and raised his megaphone to his lips.

"Burkett," he bellowed, "now batting for exercise!"

§ 333 The Surprise Party

Apropos of the colored man's readiness at adapting himself to any unexpected situation, a distinguished clergyman of the Southern Methodist church recently told me a little story which he said was founded on facts.

His account ran as follows:

"On the plantation where I passed most of my boyhood was a quick-witted old black man who spent most of his spare time—and most of it was spare time at that—hunting and fishing or prowling in the woods. One day he was going through a strip of timber when he saw a young squirrel dodge into one of a series of holes in a rotted hickory. He had failed to bring his gun along with him but with visions of pot-pie making his ample mouth watery, he skinned up the snag.

"He was just about to plunge one hand into the hole where the squirrel had vanished, meanwhile holding on with his other hand

and both of his legs, when from another opening slightly higher than the first, a huge blue racer darted a foot of its length out so that its malevolent eyes stared right into his popped eyes and its long forked tongue licked the tip of his nose.

"With a shriek, Uncle Jabe let go of all grips and dropped twenty feet with a tremendous thump.

"When he came to he looked aloft to where the reptile's pointed head and slender neck still swayed to and fro, and dreamily he said:

" 'Well, Mister Snake, I suttinly s'prised you dat time, didn't I?' "

§ 334 Those Difficult Pants

Homer Davenport, the famous cartoonist, told it to me. One evening a few months before his death, we were at a dinner together and the talk fell on early experiences. Davenport suddenly threw back his head and laughed.

"I'm thinking," he said, "of a thing that happened to me when I was a gangling kid out in Oregon. They organized a brass band in our town and I broke into it to play the slip-horn or, as some of these Easterners might call it, the slide trombone. A job lot of uniforms was ordered but of course none of them would fit me. So they measured me with a string and sent the plans and specifications to an outfitting house in Chicago and in due time my uniform arrived.

"The coat wasn't so bad—a trifle of four or five inches too short in the sleeves, perhaps, and the collar tried to choke me to death every time I put the darn thing on and buttoned it up. Still, these were mere technical details.

"But the pants—say, listen, believe it or not, when I wore those pants I had to take two steps while they were taking one."

§ 335 A Trade for a Light Weight

Opie Read is one of the largest men in the writing game or, for that matter, in any game. Anywhere outside of a congress of professional side-show giants, he would attract attention. He has height, width and depth.

You know how much larger a man looks with his clothes off than he does when dressed for company? Well, one day, Read was stretched out on a couch in the cooling-room of a Turkish bath when a stranger coming in from the steam-room and blinking as the sweat

ran down his face, spied the great bulk and halted. He wiped his eyes clear and then approaching the other said in a reverent voice:

"I beg your pardon for addressing a perfect stranger, but you have aroused my curiosity. Would you mind telling me who you are?"

"Not at all," said Read. "I'm a jockey."

§ 336 What the Faithless Would Get

The dusky converts stood at the water's edge awaiting the ceremony of being dipped. The officiating clergyman—a bulky bishop of the Colored Baptist church—saw fit to exhort them before he led them, one by one, out into the stream.

"My Brethren and my Sistern," he said, "hark to my words. 'Tain't 'nuff that you should have words of thanksgivin' on yore lips. 'Tain't ample that you is shoutin' out 'hallelujahs' and 'amens' till yore throats is hoarse an' yore voices brek in the middle. No, suzz.

"Onlessen you got the spirit of the Lawd pressin' heavy 'pon you an' the ole-time religion in yore souls; onlessen you is filled wid happy hopes of the hereafter an' fear of ole Satan; onlessen you feels that the angels is lookin' down on you wid favor frum Heaven above an' that the cherubims is singin' sweet praise fur yore salvation an' the Pearly Gates is done swung wide open to welcome you ez worthy pilgrims an' de golden harps is tuned fur you an' yore wings is waitin' to be fitted onto yore shoulders; onlessen you has all these here feelin's, you won't git nothin' when you is immersed in the holy waters of the River Jordan—'cept wet."

§ 337 A Change of Tactics

With the look of an angel shining out of his big brown eyes, the little seven-year-old climbed up the front steps and knocked at the front door of the very deaf old lady who lived in the small house on the corner. She answered his call.

He stared up at her soulfully.

"Howdy-do, Lady," he said politely. "Is this your itty-bitty kitty puss?" He pointed with the fingers of his free hand to a very diminutive, very bedraggled-looking animal that he carried in the crook of his other arm.

The householder caught neither the words nor the gesture.

"Hey?" she inquired.

"Is this your poor little lost pussy?"

The old lady cupped a palm over her ear and bent down toward him.

"How's that?" she inquired.

"Say," he shouted, "listen to me. Is this your —— —— cat?"

§ 338 It Worked Out to a Cent

The visitor was an Englishman. He was paying his first visit to America, having come to see his married daughter and his newly-arrived grandson.

As it happened, the steamer landed earlier than was expected and there was no one at the dock to greet him. But he knew his daughter's address—it was a matter of only six blocks across town from the wharves—and in due time a public conveyance landed him with his luggage at the proper destination. Before anyone suspected his presence, he was ringing at the apartment door.

"But father," asked the young matron, after he had been welcomed, "did you have any difficulty in getting here?"

"Not at all," he said. "The only thing that perplexed me was your Yankee money. On the ship I had two pounds changed into American coins. The purser tried to explain their value but I couldn't understand him—after dealing with pennies and shillings and half crowns, these Yankee terms seemed so stupid."

"Well, then, how did you reckon how to pay your taxi fare?" she asked.

"I didn't try," he said. "When the cab stopped here in front of the house I thought of an expedient. I'm very quick-witted in money matters, as you know. So I just fished out from my pocket all the Yankee money the purser had given me—quite a handful of it, I assure you, and I held it out to the cabby so that he might take his fare."

"How much did he take?"

"That's the extraordinary part of it," said the canny Britisher; "he took it all. By a remarkable coincidence I had produced the exact amount due."

§ 339 Only One Detail Lacking

Near where I used to live there was a distinguished lawyer who had served a term or two in Congress. Like most Kentuckians of

his type, he loved good horseflesh. Also, he had a very pretty wit of his own.

In this same town was a blacksmith who had turned—or thought he had turned—racehorseman. He owned a bony mare which in the fond eye of her owner had the makings in her of a trotter—a belief which few, if any, other persons in the community shared with him.

The infatuated blacksmith bought an elaborate outfit—high-wheeled racing sulky, interfering boots, jingling harness, fancy breechings—the whole thing. For himself he purchased a peaked cap and the orthodox linen duster.

On a proud day he drove down the principal street to exhibit the mare and her finery and his to the populace. On the corner by the post-office he encountered the former Congressman. He drew up with a flourish.

"Colonel," he hailed, "you're a judge of these things. Just look us over and give me your honest opinion."

The lawyer squinted his eye at the spectacle.

"Perfect," he commented, "practically perfect in every detail."

"What do you think of that set of interferers?"

"Couldn't be beat."

"And I call your attention to this here russet leather harness. Purty good, eh?"

"Magnificent."

"Well, Colonel, speaking as man to man, could you think of anything more that's needed to make this here racing outfit complete?"

"Well, my friend," said the Colonel, "if you put it that way, I might suggest that you do need just one thing."

"What's that, Colonel?"

"A hoss."

§ 340 First Come, First Served

One Sunday there was a miners' picnic at Butte, Montana. An outstanding feature of the day's festivities was a tug-of-war between a team of Slovaks and a team of Irishmen.

The Slovaks were winning, so the Irishmen dropped the rope and began to fight. It was a good fight. One brawny Irishman had an opponent down and was pounding him at his leisure, when a friend dashed up:

"Gimme a belt at him," said the friend.

"G'wan," replied the other out of the side of his mouth; "go and git wan for yerself."

§ 341 Evidences of Regeneration

By a unamimous vote of the plantation hands one Henry Johnson was held to be the wickedest man on the place. He shot craps, he had served a year on the chain gang for swinging a wicked razor, and generally lived a wild, free, reckless life. Accordingly, there was rejoicing at Zion church when word spread that Henry at last had seen the light and had been converted.

The revival meeting whereat he had been redeemed culminated one Sunday in a grand baptizing on Goose Creek. Henry had an eight-mile tramp to reach the appointed spot. When he started from his cabin after breakfast he stowed a dozen cold biscuits in the front of his shirt, meaning to refresh himself on the way. But in his new-born exaltation he actually forgot to eat.

A great host was gathered on the creek bank and, at his appearance, loud hallelujahs arose in a fervent chorus. The preacher laid hands on Henry and, aided by two of the deacons, escorted him to the middle of the stream where the water was waist-deep. As the clergyman, pronouncing the words of the ritual, immersed Henry deeply in the water the lowermost button of Henry's shirt slipped from its buttonhole and rapidly, one by one, four huge cold biscuits arose to the surface and went bobbing down the current.

From the shore a devout sister raised a sudden cry:

"Oh, Lordy, Parson, dip 'im ag'in—dip 'im ag'in, in de Lord's name! His sins is comin' up in lumps."

§ 342 As to Time Limits

Two Chicago youths played the piano and sang songs in a cabaret. The European craze for American rag-time lured them to go abroad. On their arrival at Liverpool they applied to the manager of a local theatre for a job.

On their appearance and their accounts of how good they were, he agreed to sign them.

"How long does your act run?" he asked, as he prepared to fill out the contracts.

"Oh, about twenty-five minutes," said the spokesman for the team.

"Twenty-five minutes!" exclaimed the manager. "My dear sirs, ours is a very long bill. I cannot give you that much time—our

turns have to be very short. Eight minutes is as much as I can allow you."

"Eight minutes—hell!" shouted the trouper. "Why, Bo, we bows for seven minutes!"

§ 343 The Lure of the Limelight

Mike Cunningham, who was an interesting Chicago character, got a job as stage-hand at a vaudeville theatre. In his first week it fell to him to don a policeman's uniform, and at the conclusion of one of the scenes in a comedy sketch he chased a comedy tramp across the stage, meanwhile brandishing a big club.

On Wednesday night he went to the dressing-room of the comedian and said:

"Say, do me a favor, will you?"

"What is it?" asked the actor.

"When I chase you acrost the stage tonight let me catch you and beat you up. Me goil's out front!"

§ 344 Negative Results

Said the occasional imbiber to his friend:

"Had a long serious talk with a barkeeper in a blind tiger today. Yep, I guess we must have talked half an hour."

"What did you find to say to him?" inquired the friend.

"Plenty. As a matter of fact, most of the conversation was on my side. But he listened all right. I poured arguments at him one right after the other."

"Well, what did he say when you got through?"

"He said 'NO'!"

§ 345 The Fate of the Opposition

A scholarly gentleman who was graduated from Trinity College in Dublin, told me that this story was true—that it had been repeated in Ireland for a great many years and that, regardless of the religious affiliations of its hearers, it always was received with enthusiasm.

As the tale was told to me, a distinguished Catholic lawyer of Dublin laid a wager with a Protestant friend that no matter what catch line might be flung at Daniel O'Connell, the great Irish patriot

and orator and wit, the later would fire back an instantaneous and apt retort.

The parties to the wager caught O'Connell at a casual moment and the man who had staked his money on the negative side approached him and, with a solemn expression of countenance, said:

"Mr. O'Connell, we've just had very bad news. The bottom dropped out of Purgatory this morning and all the Catholics fell into hell."

"God save us!" exclaimed O'Connell. "The poor Protestants have had a terrible crushing!"

§ 346 A Feast for the Soul Only

The menu was printed in French but the gentleman who came in for dinner did not intend to admit his lack of acquaintance with foreign tongues.

He took the bill-of-fare in his hands and studied it with an air of great intentness. Then he aimed a stout forefinger at a certain item near the top of the card and to the waiter who was bending over his shoulder he said:

"To start off with, I'll take some of that!"

"I'm sorry, sir," said the servitor, "but the orchestra is playing *that!*"

§ 347 A Martyr to Duty

This story first became popular, I believe, in the old local option days. It is quite as applicable, though, now that Prohibition is a nation-wide proposition, as it was when the various states and counties contended with the drink problem each in its own way.

According to the earlier version, a greenhorn landed in a dry town out West and set forth to find the wherewithal for the curing of a great thirst. After he had made the painful discovery that it was impossible to obtain red liquor unless the buyer was known personally to the venders, he, having no acquaintance in the community, besought a compassionate-looking citizen to give him aid. The native advised him to consult a physician professionally.

The suppliant invaded the nearest doctor's office.

"Doc," he began with no delaying preamble, "I'd like to get a prescription for a bottle of whiskey."

"Can't serve you, my friend, unless you need the stuff,"

stated the medico. "To do otherwise would be against the law."

"Well, don't I look like I need it?"

"That may be, but according to the statute I can only minister to your health, not to your appetite. Now, for instance, if you had just been bitten by a poisonous snake—say a rattlesnake—I could help you out because that would constitute an emergency—your life, so to speak, would be at stake. Have you ever been bitten by a rattlesnake?"

"No."

"Well, go and get bitten."

"Where'll I go?"

"You'll find a snake right back of the drugstore across the street. A lot of my patients patronize him."

Filled with hope, the tourist hurried away. In half an hour he returned, shaking his head despondently and with grief written large upon his face.

"No use," he moaned.

"What's the matter?" inquired the physician.

"Nothing's the matter with me," explained the other, "but the snake is too derned tired to bite a stranger."

§ 348 Placing the Blame

On a street car sat a young matron. She was drowsy: presently her head began to nod and she slept lightly. At her side was a lad of ten, beautifully dressed. Long golden ringlets covered his head and shoulders. Almost any woman would say that a child so blessed should be happy. But this child did not appear to be happy.

Perhaps that was because two rough-looking crop-headed youngsters of approximately his own age were snickering at him from across the aisle. Presently, emboldened by the fact that the lady with him slumbered, they began dealing in audible taunts.

"Ya, ya, ya, Sissy!" gibed one in a hissing undertone.

"Girl baby!" said the second tormentor. "That's all—just an old girl baby!"

"Say, kid," demanded the first, "who curled your hair for you?"

The object of their derision cast a cautious glance upward to make sure the sleeper had not roused. Then, in a voice quivering with suppressed indignation he answered:

"My mother—dam' her!"

§ 349 More of the Same to Come

As they used to say out West, the Left Wing of Price's army settled in Nevada after the Civil War. This was another way of stating that a considerable number of ex-Confederates, mainly from Missouri and Arkansas, moved to these parts in the latter sixties and early seventies.

Among them was a stubby little ex-cavalryman who remained unreconstructed. He had an enormous love for everything Southern and, by the same token, a fiery contempt and hatred for whatever was Northern. As the especial object of his wrath he picked on—for no discernible reason—a large phlegmatic German who had served as a private in the Union forces.

The Johnny Reb went out of his way to taunt his neighbor. The German bore his goadings with a marvelous patience. Possibly he could not understand all that his unreasonable enemy said to him, or perhaps he did not greatly care.

One day, on his way to the county seat, the Southerner, who was riding horseback, met the German coming toward him on a buckboard. It suited the former's whim to assume that the ex-Federal hogged too great a share of the road.

"That's the last straw!" he shouted as he halted his horse squarely across the path of the other. "You infernal Blue Belly, you've gone too far with me at last. Now then, get down out of that wagon. I'm going to give you the dam'dest licking that ever a man got in his life!"

Without a word, the German climbed out. Still without a word he laid hands on the little man and hammered him into a pulp. Then, maintaining his silence, he got back into the buckboard, took up the lines and made ready to drive on.

Spitting blood, the battered irreconcilable sat up in the dust and wagged an advising forefinger at his conqueror.

"Let this be a lesson to you," he stated, "because I give you fair warning right now that unless you behave yourself better in future I intend to serve you this way again every time I see you!"

§ 350 One with a Tender Nature

The wealthy white-goods importer sat in his palatial office when a ragged timorous figure came creeping into his presence. He recognized the newcomer as an old friend from the old country. As boys,

they had grown up in the same town. They had come to America together, afterwards drifting apart. Now, after all these intervening years, his fellow-immigrant had searched him out to tell him a woeful story.

"You are rich," he said; "und I am, oh, so poor! Und I need help so very, very much! Listen while I tell you what has happened to me!"

He told—how his wife had run away from him and his children had scattered; how he had failed in one line of business and had entered another only to have a dishonest partner cheat him out of his last cent; how now his health was breaking down and he must go to the poorhouse unless some one who knew him in happier times came to his assistance.

At this juncture his old friend burst into violent weeping. He pressed a push-button in the side of his desk. A brawny porter answered the ring. "Jim," said the merchant, between sobs, "throw this man out—he is breaking my heart!"

§ 351 This Mortal Coil

In a South Carolina town a business man, beset by domestic and financial worries, had blown his brains out. Naturally, the tragedy, for the time being, was the main local topic of conversation.

A resident who knew the suicide slightly, was discussing the sad affair with his negro office servant.

"Joe," he said, "speaking of such things, I've been struck by a curious circumstance. To the best of my recollection, I never heard of a member of your race deliberately killing himself because of private troubles, and yet every day in the papers we see where white people have been taking their own lives. I wonder why this should be. You're a negro yourself, what are your theories on the subject?"

"Mista Barnwell," said Joe, "yere's de way it 'tis: A w'ite man gits hisse'f in a jam and he can't seem to see no way out of it and he sets down and thinks about it and thinks about it some mo' and after awhile he grabs up a pistol and shoots hisself.

"A black man he gits snarled up in trouble de same way and he sets down and starts thinkin'—and after 'while he goes to leep!"

§ 352 "Backward, Oh Backward——"

The operation for the rejuvenation of youth has been performed upon the seventy-year-old patient. As he comes from under the influence of the ether he begins to weep bitterly.

A kind-faced nurse bends over him.

"Don't be distressed," she says comfortably. "The operation was a complete success in every detail. When you leave here you'll be feeling ever so many years younger."

But the poor old man only continues to wail, the tears flowing down his cheeks and losing themselves in his long white whiskers.

"Don't cry," pleads his nurse. "The pain which you feel now will soon pass away."

"I'm not crying because of the pain," explains the disconsolate one, between his racking sobs. "I'm afraid I'll be late for school."

§ 353 How Uncle Won His Trade

"I had an uncle," said Harry Hershfield, the cartoonist, "who lived in Chicago. He desired to open up a shoe-shining emporium. The neighborhood where he established his business was already dotted with similar stands.

"The proprietors of these places were Greeks and Italians. But who ever heard of a Jewish competitor allowing himself to be beaten by a lot of Latins?

"It wasn't very long until my uncle was doing a more flourishing business than anybody along the street. Of course he was a hard worker and he kept his crew right on their toes—or rather, on the customers' toes—but I think it was his way of advertising that brought in the trade.

"Over the door of his shop he had a big sign reading: 'One Shoe Shined Free!'"

§ 354 Getting Even with the Folks

Nellie Revell, one of the most famous women in America and justly so, spent several years of her youth with a circus. She knows hundreds of stories—humorous, pathetic, dramatic, tragic—of the life under the big top.

"That the circus, in the minds of the public, is still several notches below the Four Hundred in the social scale is sad but true," says

Miss Revell. "The attitude of the average citizen toward the tent people is exemplified by the following story on Zach Terrill, manager of the Sells-Floto show. He was standing in front of the main entrance when he was accosted by a handsome young fellow, about twenty-five, well-dressed and intelligent looking.

"'I live right over in Indian Orchard, the next town,' he said, 'and I want to go with the show.'

"'Well, what can you do?' countered Terrill. 'You have to know something about the show business before you can be of any use to us.'

"'I'm willing to do anything at all,' insisted the applicant, looking grim and desperate, 'but I've got to go with a circus. I just had some trouble with my folks and I want to disgrace 'em.'"

§ 355 The Ravages of a Plague

As he traveled through the Arkansas bottoms, the tourist from the East marveled at the fecundity of canine life as manifested in every settlement. Late in the afternoon he came to a cabin set in the middle of a clearing and halted to ask his way.

The head of the house, a bewhiskered person, came to the fence in answer to the traveler's hail and gave him the directions for reaching the county-seat. With him came a perfect eruption of barking, lop-eared hounds; some black and tan and some showing a mongrel admixture in their coloring.

"How many dogs have you?" asked the Easterner.

"Well, suh," said the native, "I've had a sight of bad luck with my hound-dawgs—some kind of a disease has got in amongst 'em and keeps on killin' 'em off. I've doctored 'em the best I know how but seems like it don't do no good. Let's see, now—how many have I got left? There's Ring and Sounder and Queenie, yonder, and Rip and Ole Tige, the daddy of the pack, and Trixie and the new litter of pups under the house—jest 'leven in all."

He sighed deeply.

"Sometimes—sometimes it looks like I ain't never goin' to be able to git a good start on hound-dawgs no more."

§ 356 A Passion for Statistics

Down in the foothills of the Tennessee mountains there once resided a gentleman whose claims to distinction lay in three things—

his appetite, his capacity and his digestion. He played no favorites in the food line—he could eat anything that was edible and in incredible quantities. But if he liked one thing a little better than anything else that thing was the canned oyster of commerce—the kind that used to be packed in a circular can with a bull's head on the label and which was customarily anointed with pepper sauce before being consumed.

In the hope of testing his storage facilities a group of his neighbors formed a pool, each contributing half a dollar. The entire amount was invested in cove oysters and then the champion was invited to come to the general store on an appointed afternoon and show what he could do. He came and before an awestricken audience he showed.

Disdaining to use tools he swallowed down the provided bivalves, juice and all, from the container. Almost before the storekeeper could open a fresh can he had emptied the can opened a minute before. In half an hour the supply on the shelves of the store had vanished and still the marvel showed no evidence of being satiated.

He scooped up a few truant oysters which had lodged in his whiskers and in the opening of his waistcoat and sent them on their way to join their brethren. Then he remarked:

"Well, since there don't 'pear to be no more eatin' goin' on I better be puttin' out for home—it's gittin' on toward supper time."

Two of the contributors to the purse drifted out upon the porch to watch his slouching figure vanish in the dusk. For a space they stood in silence. Then one of them said:

"'Tain't no matter of doubt about it—I reckon that there Gabe Coombs is shorely the champion cove oyster eater of all creation."

"He shorely is," agreed the other.

"I wonder how many cove oysters could he eat at one sittin'?" said the first.

"More'n you and me could pay fur—I know that much," said the second.

"I wonder could he eat all the cove oysters they is in the world?" said the first.

"I don't know," said the second; "how many cove oysters is they in the world, anyway?"

§ 357 The Real Essence of Poetry

Colonel Bozeman Bulger went back to his old home for a visit after several years' absence. On the main street of the small Ala-

bama town where he had spent his boyhood he encountered the leading colored barber, an old acquaintance of his.

"Kunnel," said the black man, "they tells me you's a literary gene'lman now."

"Well," said the visitor, "I write for the newspapers and once in a while for the magazines and I have had one or two books printed."

"Dat's sufficient for me," said his colored friend. "You's de very man I's lookin' fur. I crave your expert opinion."

"Why, have you been writing something yourself?" asked Bulger.

"Yessur, I has. I wrote a poem fur a sign in my barber shop. Whut worries me is dat folks comes into my place and reads dat sign and busts out laffin'."

"Well, was it meant to be laughed at?"

"Naw suh, 'twas meant to be serious. So I'm axin' you, please suh, to tak a look at it and tell me ef they's anythin' wrong wid it."

So Bulger accompanied the colored man into his establishment and after reading the verse which hung upon the wall enclosed in a gold frame he gave it his enthusiastic endorsement, not only as having poetic value but as embodying a sound commercial principle.

The verse ran as follows:

"Roses is red,
Vilets is blue.
Don't ask me fur credit
'Cause I'll have to say no."

§ 358 A Vacancy to Be Filled

I had this one from my grandfather. My grandson—if ever I am so fortunate as to have one—shall have it in turn from me. I believe it possesses merits which make it worthy of being handed down to posterity.

The minister had a reputation for being long-winded. On this Sunday he was in especially good form. His topic was the Prophets of the Bible. For more than an hour he droned along.

"Now then," he added, "we have disposed of the Major Prophets. And next we come to the Minor Prophets. To what place, my friends, shall we assign the Minor Prophets?"

He paused as though for a reply. And got a reply from an unexpected quarter.

From a rear pew rose a bored-looking stranger. He waved an explanatory arm toward the seat he had just vacated and spoke:

"Parson," he said, "don't worry. One of 'em can have my place."

§ 359 Easy for the Trained Mind

I was a reporter on the New York *Evening World.* The body of a young woman, expensively dressed, was found in a thicket in a lonely and remote part of Long Island. She had been murdered —shot through the head. Harry Stowe, of our staff, since deceased, was the first reporter to reach the place. The body had not been moved; and in searching about it Stowe happened upon something the local coroner had overlooked—a scrap of discolored paper, bearing printed and written words in German upon it.

Stowe quietly slipped the paper into his pocket and caught the first train for town. He couldn't read German himself, so he took his find to the office of the German consul. There he met an elderly, spectacled, exceedingly serious-looking under-secretary, who translated the printed and written inscriptions for him.

Then the secretary wanted to know what it was all about. Stowe told him, explaining that the identity of the murdered woman was still a profound mystery—that nobody could guess who or what she was. He described her clothing in some detail.

"Pooh!" snorted the German. "Stupid fools that these American policemen are! To the trained mind the whole thing is simplicity itself. By a process of elimination and deduction it is possible to ascertain beyond question exactly what manner of woman this was."

"Could you do it?" asked Stowe hopefully.

"In one little minute!" said the under-secretary impressively.

"Go ahead then, please, and do it," begged Stowe.

"Very well," said the German. "My young friend, please follow me closely. This paper shows that some woman bought at a store in Leipsic certain small articles, kitchen utensils—a breadknife, a potato-masher, a coffee-grinder. No woman in Germany, unless she was a housewife, would buy such things. So!

"On the other hand, this woman, you tell me, wore forty-dollar corsets. No woman in Germany, unless she was an actress, would wear forty-dollar corsets.

"No actress would buy common household utensils. That would make her a housewife! No housewife would wear forty-dollar corsets. That would make her an actress! And there you are!"

§ 360 Speed!

Wilson Misner, the playwright, spent several years in the Klondike at the height of the gold rush when life was uncertain. Re-

ports came back to his old home in San Francisco that he had been shot—or shot at—by a bad man in one of the mining camps. When he returned from the wilds, a fellow Californian, meeting him on the street, asked for details regarding the affray.

"We heard down here that you had rather a close call," he said. "Tell me just what happened?"

"Well," said Misner, "it was like this: In a saloon one night something I said or did gave offense to a professional gunman. Before I had time to explain that I meant no personal reflection upon him, he'd gone into action. He yanked a big forty-four calibre pistol out of his holster and just as I turned to get away he cracked down on me at a distance of not more than ten feet. Before he could shoot the second time I was out of the door."

"Then he missed you," said his friend.

"No," said Misner, "he hit me right between the shoulders."

"You must have been pretty badly hurt then?"

"No, just a slight flesh wound."

"A flesh wound at that range? I don't understand why he didn't bore a hole clear through you."

"Well, you see," said Misner, "by the time that guy could pull the trigger I was traveling so fast the bullet only went in about a quarter of an inch."

§ 361 An Apology with a Stinger

In the latter years of his life Henry James, the American novelist, lived in England. He had a country-house in one of the southern counties. A British millionaire bought an adjoining place. The latter was not a particularly attractive neighbor. Starting from humble beginnings, he had made his fortune as a manufacturer of jams, jellies and condiments. But, having been made a knight and having turned country gentleman, he strove to make the fashionable world forget he ever had been in trade. It was reported that he grew red in the face if fruit were mentioned in his presence.

This person was touchy regarding the dignities of his new estate and his present position. He posted trespass signs in conspicuous places on the walls of his private park. One day he wrote James a rather curt note stating that James' servants, in going to and from the near-by village, were given to crossing a corner of his grounds, and demanding that the practice cease forthwith.

In reply, the novelist sent a courteous note of apology reading as follows:

"My Dear Sir:

"I am deeply grieved to learn from you that certain of my employees have been invading your preserves. I assure you the offense shall not be repeated.

"Yours regretfully,

"Henry James.

"P. S.—I beg your pardon for using the word 'preserves'."

§ 362 One of Our Native Types

Nearly everybody who went to Yellowstone Park in the old days remembers—or should remember—the old stage-coach driver who went under the name of Petrified Johnson. He was a picturesque looking person and his language was picturesque, too.

John McCutcheon was recalling an incident of a trip he made through the Park once under the chaperonage of Mr. Johnson. On a hillside the mules hauling the coach slowed down almost to a crawl. They were dragging a heavy cargo of tourists and the grade was very steep. As they dawdled onward, turning their long, coffin-shaped heads outward as is the custom of tired mules and staring with lackluster eyes at the landscape, the veteran swung his whip and shouted in a rousing roar:

"Git up, you scenery-loving sons of guns!"

He acquired his sobriquet through a remark he made long years ago to a woman. He came from Arizona and was proud of its natural beauties—prouder even than he was of the natural beauties of Yellowstone, of which he was very proud, indeed.

One day, so the story runs, he was descanting upon the marvels of Arizona's Petrified Forest.

"Is it so very wonderful?" asked a lady visitor.

"Ma'am," said the old-timer, "there ain't nothin' like it nowheres on this earth. It's the most petrified place there is. Why, Ma'am, once't upon a time down there I recollect of seein' a petrified bird settin' up on a petrified limb in the top of a petrified tree—singin' of a petrified song!"

§ 363 Just Naturally Quick-Witted

There used to be an Irishman who functioned as chief barker for a sight-seeing coach in New Orleans. One of the places included in the itinerary of the tours was a famous cemetery.

On a certain morning as the rubber-neck wagon, heavily laden with tourists, turned in between the gates of the cemetery the orator, facing the passengers, proceeded, through his megaphone, to chant his customary explanation:

"To the right you see a shaft erected in mimory av our Heroic Confederate Dead. To the left is a beautiful shaft erected by the rich Mr. Moriarty in mimory av his wife. This shaft is 100 feet high, and half way up 'tis ornamented wid four female figures."

A woman visitor spoke up:

"What do the four figures represent?" she asked.

This was the first time the barker had been asked this question and he hesitated a minute before answering. Then inspiration came to him:

"Thim? Why thim, Ma'am, are Faith, Hope, Charity—an'—an'—Mrs. Moriarty."

§ 364 Proof from the Audience

The lecturer on the occult was warming to his subject. He was dealing at this particular point with supernatural manifestations.

"Ah, my friends," he exclaimed, "if you could all but be made to believe! If only the world would cease from its scoffing and come to realize the truth. I have told you of my own experiences, but surely, surely in this audience is someone else who has had direct communication with a departed spirit. If there is any person here present who ever has been in touch with a ghost I would ask him to stand up."

From his seat in the front row of the balcony a citizen of a Celtic cast of countenance got upon his feet.

"Here's wan!" he stated simply.

The delighted speaker checked an outburst of involuntary applause from the true believers on the lower floor of the house.

"This is very gratifying," he stated. "Behold, a volunteer witness, one who is a stranger to me, arises to give his testimony. My good sir, so I understand you to say that you have been in touch with a ghost?"

"In touch wit' him?" echoed the citizen, "I sh'd say I was in touch wit' him. He butted me till I was black and blue."

"A ghost butted you?"

"Aw hell!" exclaimed the gentleman as he sank back into his place. "I thought you said a goat!"

§ 365 The Triumph of a Traitor

Possibly I attach undue importance to this occurrence because it happened to me. You may have noticed that most of us are inclined to attach importance to events in which we, personally, have figured. It's a common human failing.

At any rate, this particular incident came to pass once upon a time when I was on a speaking tour. Being green at the lecture game I had a little expedient for getting myself off the platform. My subject was the World War, from which I had lately returned. When I had concluded my more extended remarks I would invite questions from the audience on any phase of the great conflict upon which I had, or had not, touched during the early part of the evening. Invariably there would be responses from all parts of the house, for in those days people were tremendously interested in what was going on in Europe.

After I had grown weary of making replies I would take my handkerchief from my pocket and pass it across my forehead. This was the cue for my manager, stationed at the back of the hall, to call out:

"Mr. Cobb, do you expect to return to the War?"

"Ah," I would say instantly, "the question asked by the gentleman in the rear reminds me of a certain story." Then I would tell the story and, as I concluded it, make my final bow and retreat into the wings. The trick had the air of being spontaneous and impromptu and served as an appropriate exit.

But when I reached Los Angeles my manager fell ill. Seeking a substitute for him, I went to my friend, Charley Van Loan, now deceased, one of the dearest fellows in the world and one of the most incorrigible practical jokers that ever lived, and asked him to serve as understudy. He consented. I drilled him until he seemed letter perfect in his part, but to be on the safe side we held one more private rehearsal behind the scenes before I went out on the stage; and then he slipped around to his appointed place and I stepped out and began.

The big auditorium was packed, and my humble efforts were well received. At ten-thirty I reached the end of my peroration and invited queries. They were fired at me thick and fast from all quarters. When I was good and tired I gave the signal. I could see Van Loan looming up—he was well over six feet tall—away back yonder by the entrance, but he seemed not to have seen me.

Ignoring the interrogations from all others, I mopped my stream-

ing brow feverishly. Still my chosen confederate stood silent. I waved the handkerchief to and fro and mopped again. "Were there any more questions?" I asked, desperately.

There were—plenty of them, but it was one particular question for which I waited. The delay became embarrassing; I guess the audience could tell that I was distressed, for all at once a lull ensued. There was a prolonged, heart-breaking stage wait.

It was broken by the booming voice of Van Loan.

"Mr. Cobb," he called out, "there is one question I should like to put to you, if you please."

"Ah, yes, indeed," I said gladly. "What is the question please?"

"Where do you go from here?"

THE END

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